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YIQUN ZHOU

Festivals, Feasts,  
and Gender Relations  
in Ancient China  
and Greece

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## Festivals, Feasts, and Gender Relations in Ancient China and Greece

Ancient China and Greece are two classical civilizations that have exerted far-reaching influence in numerous areas of human experience and are often invoked as the paradigms in East–West comparison. This book examines gender relations in the two ancient societies as reflected in convivial contexts such as family banquets, public festivals, and religious feasts. Two distinct patterns of interpersonal affinity and conflict emerge from the Chinese and Greek sources that show men and women organizing themselves and interacting with each other in social occasions intended for the collective pursuit of pleasure. Through an analysis of these patterns, Yiqun Zhou illuminates the different sociopolitical mechanisms, value systems, and fabrics of human bonds in the two classical traditions. Her book will be an important resource for readers who are interested in the comparative study of societies, gender studies, women's history, and the legacy of civilizations.

Yiqun Zhou is an assistant professor in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at Stanford University.



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## Preface

This book is a study of interpersonal relationships and structures of sentiment, with a special focus on their reflection in various sociable contexts and on the gender dimension, in ancient China and Greece (ca. 10th–4th centuries BCE). By examining a wide range of sources (mainly literary and historical) that show men and women engaging in the collective pursuit of pleasure on such occasions as family banquets, public festivals, and religious feasts, the study aims to illuminate the different sociopolitical mechanisms, value systems, and human bonds in the two classical civilizations that have exerted far-reaching influences in numerous areas of human experience.

My inquiry steps outside the predominant subjects of study in the fast-growing field of China–Greece comparative research, namely, science, medicine, philosophy, and historiography.<sup>1</sup> By focusing on human

<sup>1</sup> Examples of the articles and book chapters in the existing literature: Keightley (1993), G. Lloyd (1990, ch. 4), Nylan (2000), Schaberg (1999), Turner (1990), Vernant and Gernet (1980), and Wooyeal and Bell (2004). Journals such as the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, *Philosophy East and West*, *Dao*, and *Asian Philosophy* from time to time publish comparative studies on Chinese and Greek philosophy. Most recently, a special issue of the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* (2002, vol. 29, issue 3) was devoted to comparing Chinese and Greek ethics. Monographs: Beecroft (2010), Chen Fang (2001), Jullien ([1995] 2000), Kim (2009), Kuriyama (1999), Li Zhiqiang (2008), Liu Chenglin (2001), G. Lloyd (1996, 2002, 2004, 2005), Lloyd and Sivin (2002), X. Lu (1998), Raphals (1992), Reding (1985, 2004), Shankman and Durrant (2000, 2002), Wang Daqing (2006), and J. Yu (2007). The preceding list includes only publications that focus on comparing China and Greece, and leaves out such works as David A. Hall and Roger T. Ames's voluminous studies (1987, 1998, 1999) on Chinese and Western philosophies, in which the Greeks play an important role. Shankman and Durrant (2000: 4–8; 2002: 3–5) offer useful reviews of the literature that to various degrees draws inspiration from a juxtaposition of ancient China and Greece.

Only two essays to date focus on gender issues in ancient China and Greece. Nylan (2000) compares images of elite women in the Akhaimenid (559–331 BCE) and Han (206 BCE–220 CE) empires as they are portrayed in contemporary Greek and Chinese

interaction in convivial settings, I seek to create a portrayal of the two ancient civilizations that has both structure and texture and that is both more dynamic and more concrete than earlier studies.

My study explores important topics in gender studies and family and women's history, including the relationship between the public and domestic domains, the dynamics of sexual rivalry and cooperation, the implications that homosocial bonding and gender relations have for each other, the role of religion and ritual in women's lives, and the relationship between female subjectivity and male imagination. As gender relations and the relationship between the family and the larger sociopolitical order continue to emerge as among the most protean and intensely contested aspects of human experience across cultures, my study will help provide a comparative understanding of some of the major historical paradigms in human organization whose legacies are still influential today.

Finally, I hope my inquiry will add to those studies that take sociable activities as their entry point for understanding social organization, value systems, and human relationships. This approach has already enriched our understanding of ancient Greek society, as exemplified in works by scholars such as Oswyn Murray and Pauline Schmitt-Pantel.<sup>2</sup> The awareness of the need to enlarge the scope of inquiry to gain both more valid generalizations and deeper understandings of individual cases has already led classicists to study convivial practices in the neighboring cultures of Egypt and the Middle East.<sup>3</sup> Findings from China, another major ancient civilization, will not only contribute an important case study but also enhance the theoretical interest of sociability studies.<sup>4</sup>

### Texts, Translations, Citations, and Reading Approach

All the Chinese and Greek primary texts, major commentaries, and translations consulted for this study are listed at the beginning of the bibliography. Unless otherwise indicated, all Greek texts and translations are from the Loeb Classical Library (with occasional modifications).

historical works, and Raphals (2002b) compares Chinese and Greek notions of gender and virtue through a discussion of Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, and several early Chinese historical and didactic texts.

<sup>2</sup> See these two scholars' works in the bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> Dentzer (1982), Murray ed. (1990), and W. J. Slater ed. (1991).

<sup>4</sup> Murray (2000) calls for including China among the "ancient societies" in future studies of sociability.

Chinese texts come from various editions. For the *Book of Odes*, the most important Chinese text for my study, I use Arthur Waley's translation and make modifications when necessary. The pinyin system is used for the romanization of Chinese throughout the book. For the transcription of Greek names and epithets, I have generally adopted the Greek form (e.g., Alkaios instead of Alcaeus, Ktesios instead of Ctesius) but in some cases have used the familiar Latinized form (e.g., Socrates instead of Sokrates, Achilles instead of Akhilleus).

Though literary texts form the mainstay of the primary materials in this study, I have analyzed them primarily for the insights that they offer into the ideas and practices in social relations in ancient China and Greece. Thus readers sensitive to the fine points in the aesthetic and rhetorical aspects of literary texts may find much wanting in the following pages. I believe, however, that the richness and intensity of the sentiments expressed in the literary texts will still assert themselves and that the texts provide an indispensable source for an investigation of ancient convivial life.

The staggering amount of scholarship behind almost any aspect of the issues touched on in this study makes it impossible to be exhaustive in my references to the secondary literature. I hope, however, that I have managed to cite those works that are most relevant to the topics under discussion, that represent influential positions on the issues, and that contain the most up-to-date research and can guide the reader to earlier studies.

### Acknowledgments

This book is based on my 2004 dissertation at the University of Chicago. My committee members, Anthony Yu, Michael Murrin, W. R. Johnson, and David Roy, guided me through the various stages of the project. Anthony Yu, in particular, displayed boundless faith in me as a scholar-in-the-making throughout the long years that I spent in Hyde Park. Without the benefit of his vision and constant reassurances, I could not have brought a wide-ranging and risky project such as this to fruition. Outside of Chicago, Wai-ye Li and Lisa Raphals generously read the dissertation and provided me with much-needed encouragement. I am especially grateful to Wai-ye for suggesting that I incorporate the bronze inscriptions among my Chinese primary sources.

I have come a long way since the summer of 2006, when I picked up my dissertation again and began to revise it. In the revision process, I

have benefited from the magnanimity of many colleagues and friends who took the time to read my work and discuss it with me. I thank Jim Reichert for helping me clarify some important concepts in the prospectus that I eventually submitted to Cambridge University Press. Richard P. Martin provided an informative conversation on Greek women's poetry. Andrew Abbott, Roger Ames, Miranda Brown, Martin Kern, Feng Li, Li Meng, Edward Shaughnessy, Ban Wang, and Anthony Yu read portions of various drafts and supplied stimulating comments. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Geoffrey Lloyd, Michael Nylan, and Peter White, who plowed through a later draft and sent back detailed comments. Near the final stage in the preparation of the manuscript, Mark Lewis read the entire draft and provided comments that enabled me to refine some of my arguments. My deep appreciation also goes to the two Cambridge reviewers, whose incisive and constructive comments played a crucial role in strengthening the study in almost every aspect.

I am profoundly indebted to all the colleagues and friends I have mentioned for generously sharing their knowledge and insights with me. I found it challenging but extremely rewarding to try to absorb their criticisms and suggestions during the revision process. I claim sole responsibility for whatever errors or infelicities my personal biases and limitations prevented me from correcting.

Some of the contents of this work were presented at the following venues during 2005–2006: Valparaiso University (Christ College), Harvard University (Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies), and Stanford University (Center for East Asian Studies). I thank the participants on those occasions for their valuable input. Here I also acknowledge the support from the Mrs. Giles Whiting Foundation, which provided a fellowship that helped me make a critical transition in the writing of the dissertation. In addition, my sincere appreciation is extended to Beatrice Rehl, of Cambridge University Press, my acquisitions editor, for her enthusiastic support for this book project from the beginning, and to Susan Greenberg, my copy editor, for her careful review of the manuscript.

Finally, a big thank you to Dingxin Zhao, who has tirelessly attempted to persuade me, the pessimist, that scholarship would probably give me the best chance to find meaning for a fundamentally insignificant human life. He has watched the continuous metamorphosis of this study with assured sympathy, and he has been my most inspiring critic. To him and the other pillars of my life, my parents, brother, sister, and Wu Xuezhao, a loving mentor and loyal friend for twenty years, I dedicate this book.

# Introduction

## *Kinship and Friendship*

The social relationships studied in this book are what has been called “amiable relations,” defined by “the moral obligation to feel – or at least to feign – sentiments which commit the individual to actions of altruism.”<sup>1</sup> These relations of amity fall into two broad categories, kinship and friendship.<sup>2</sup> While they may shade into each other (say, in cases of ritual kinship or ritualized friendship),<sup>3</sup> these two major modes of attachment to groups not only are mostly practically discernible and supported by different institutions but also are often defined in relation to and even in contrast to each other in political thought and in anthropological models. Most commonly, friendship is viewed as an “achieved” relationship that is independent of the “ascribed” ties of kinship, and as such, constitutes an alternative and transcendent realm of human solidarity.<sup>4</sup>

The perceived autonomous and achieved character of friendship-based bonds vis-à-vis the prescribed and “natural” connections of kinship is of great significance in the evolutionist model of the social theories that dominated in the nineteenth century and that still enjoy

<sup>1</sup> Pitt-Rivers (1973: 90).

<sup>2</sup> Pitt-Rivers (1973). This classification is widely cited by scholars who write on social groups in Western antiquity. See, e.g., Konstan (1997: 1–8) and Murray (1982: 48).

<sup>3</sup> Generally speaking, the overlapping phenomenon (less the relationship itself than the concerned parties’ perception of it) is more prominent in modern societies. For some case studies of how social scientists handle the problem in their research on contemporary kinship and friendship, see Allan (1979, 1996). In his study of ritualized friendship in ancient Greece, defined as “a bond of solidarity manifesting itself in an exchange of goods and services between individuals originating from separate social units,” Herman (1987: 10) analyzes the common features that ritualized friendship shared with both kinship and friendship.

<sup>4</sup> Konstan (1997, ch. 1).

far-reaching influence in contemporary academic and popular circles. In this model, the emergence of civil society, which is comprised of individuals severed from the family and bound together by mutual obligations and by loyalty to their commonwealth, marks a break with the premodern social order in that it witnesses a progress from status to contract.<sup>5</sup> The Greek city-state, a civic community whose members were supposed to associate with one another on principles of equality and competition, has been hailed as the ancient precursor of the nation-state of the modern West,<sup>6</sup> bearing out Edith Hamilton's (1867–1963) famous statement about the modernity of ancient Greece.<sup>7</sup> In demarcating a public, political sphere from the private, domestic sphere, and in privileging achieved roles over ascribed ones, the Greeks belong to antiquity only in a chronological sense and their proper place is in the modern world. By contrast, in the evolutionist model China stands as the quintessential example of stagnation and primitiveness for resting on kinship organizations and family ethics for millennia. In China no social, political, or religious institution succeeded in transcending kinship ties to create civic bonds and a countervailing force against the domination that the family had exerted in all spheres of Chinese society from classical antiquity until China's coerced encounter with the West in the modern era. To both Western Orientalist thinkers and patriotic Chinese intellectuals in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the enduring centrality of the family in China's sociopolitical organization and value system seems to have been at the root of the backwardness of Chinese society and betokens a despairing contrast between an unchanging China and a progressive West.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Elshtain (1993, introduction); Pateman (1988, chs. 1 and 2); C. B. Patterson (1998, ch. 1); Rosaldo (1980: 401–405). Among the nineteenth-century evolutionist social theorists were such luminaries as Johann Jakob Bachofen (1815–1887), Lewis Henry Morgan (1818–1881), Friedrich Engels (1820–1895), Henry Maine (1822–1888), and Fustel de Coulanges (1830–1889). The famous thesis “from status to contract” was formulated by Henry Maine (1861).

<sup>6</sup> Redfield (2003: 10–11).

<sup>7</sup> See Hamilton's influential book *The Greek Way*, which first appeared in 1930 and went through one revised edition and numerous printings. “By universal consent the Greeks belong to the ancient world.... But they are in it as a matter of centuries only; they have not the hall-marks that give title to a place there.... None of the great civilizations that preceded them and surrounded them served them as model. With them something completely new came into the world. They were the first Westerners; the spirit of the West, the modern spirit, is a Greek discovery and the place of the Greeks is in the modern world” (Hamilton 1943: 18–19).

<sup>8</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) played the most important role in propagating this view of China in the West (Saussy 1993: 162–163). For a concise discussion

In light of the special significance of ancient China and Greece in the evolutionist comparative paradigm structured around kinship and friendship, this study, which contrasts the cornerstone status of patrilineal kinship relationship in China with the preeminence of friendship-based relationships in Greece, has a premise that needs to be stated at the beginning. The important differences between ancient China and Greece in social organization and value system should not carry any evolutionary implication for our understanding of the two societies and their descendants. Both the ancient Chinese and the ancient Greeks struggled hard to juggle the various ways of organizing their societies and dealing with interpersonal and gender relations, just as they did in other respects in their pursuit of the good life. The criticism directed at the tendency to polarize China and Greece in comparative studies of the two civilizations should be particularly heeded in an inquiry such as this one.<sup>9</sup> Kinship and friendship constituted two primary categories of social relations in ancient China and Greece, as they did and still do in all cultures known to us. To describe one society as kinship-oriented and another as friendship-oriented must be a matter of relative difference. Moreover, it will be a sterile comparison if we do not further delineate the subcategories of relationships under the two primary categories, analyze how those relationships are configured into different nexuses of affinity and conflict, or study how the dynamics of relationships within and outside of the family and kinship network shape each other. Thus it is with an understanding of the relative nature of the differences, and of the need to disaggregate the two primary categories of amiable relations and examine the intricate correlations between them and among

of Hegel's conception of the family, see Landes (1982). On how Western evolutionist thinking influenced the views of leading Chinese thinkers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see the anthology edited by Fogel and Zarrow (1997), especially the essays by Liu and Liu (1997) and F-S. Wang (1997). Also see Glosser (2003, ch. 1) and Liang Shuming (2003: 18–22) for some representative modern criticisms of the domination of the family institution in Chinese history.

<sup>9</sup> Three noted comparatists, David Hall, Roger Ames, and François Jullien, have been sharply criticized for portraying China and Greece as neat binary opposites (e.g., aesthetic/rational, concrete/abstract, oblique/direct, spontaneity/freedom). Jullien, in particular, has sustained scathing attacks for depicting China and Greece / the West in terms of bipolar alterity and valuing China for providing a “theoretical distancing” that enables Western readers to understand their own tradition better. For such criticisms, see Billeter (2006), van Norden (2000), Reding (1996), Salkever (2004), Saussy (2002), L. Zhang (2005), H. Zhao (2007). Shankman and Durrant (2000: 6–7), however, praise Hall and Ames for successfully avoiding a simplification of the two traditions.

their various subcategories, that we embark on a comparison of interpersonal and gender relations in ancient China and ancient Greece.

The present inquiry takes as its starting point the following questions: in what different ways were the family and other social spheres (from politics to religion) related to one another in ancient China and Greece? How did such differences bear on gender relations in these two male-dominated societies if sexual separation was a key principle of social organization and the family was the major realm of activity and influence for women? What different subcategories and constellations of affinity and conflict did “kinship” and “friendship” comprise in ancient China and Greece? And, finally, in these two ancient societies did the dynamics of affinity and conflict within the family mirror those in the larger social processes or did they differ?

To answer these questions I will investigate various sociable occasions in ancient China and Greece that were intended for the collective cultivation of social bonds and during which men and women acted and interacted. Because they brought people together and especially because of the normal behavioral restrictions in these two societies that practiced sexual separation, sociable activities such as festivals, choruses, and banquets provide ideal contexts in which to observe such interactions. Moreover, examining Greek and Chinese gender relations in various sociable contexts helps locate gender in a broader perspective. Inasmuch as group pursuits of pleasure and solidarity were deeply embedded in the religious, political, and ethical life of ancient China and Greece, an analysis that attempts to unfold the nexus of social domains in these two societies enables us to understand their gender relations in light of their distinctive sociopolitical organizations and values.

In the rest of this chapter, I shall define some basic terms and concepts, provide relevant historical settings, introduce the major arguments and primary sources, and lay out the organization of the chapters. In doing so, I also wish to delimit my goals and to acknowledge what my sources and methods are best suited for and what their biases prevent me from accomplishing.

### Time and Place

This study covers a broad chronological span, roughly from the tenth to the fourth centuries BCE. According to conventional historical periodization, for China and Greece the six centuries fall into the major periods shown in Table 1.1.



TABLE 1.1. *Historical periods, ca. tenth to fourth centuries BCE*

China		Greece	
ca. 1045–771 BCE	Western Zhou	12–9th c. BCE	Dark Age
770–256 BCE	Eastern Zhou	ca. 800–480 BCE	Archaic period
770–ca. 450 BCE	Spring and Autumn period	480–323 BCE	Classical period
ca. 450–221 BCE	Warring States period	323–31 BCE	Hellenistic period

Both “China” and “Greece” had changing geographical and political connotations and neither was a unitary territorial or political entity during the six centuries under investigation. In this section, I shall clarify in what sense ancient China (ca. 1000–450 BCE) and ancient Greece (ca. 800–300 BCE) make distinctive civilizational units despite the huge geographical variations and historical changes within each tradition.

Following the breakdown of kingships at the end of the Greek Dark Age, hundreds of independent city-states (*poleis*) made up Greece, and they would remain the characteristic form of Greek political organization deep into the Hellenistic and Roman periods.<sup>10</sup> The far-flung Greek world that will unfold in this study includes Greece proper, the Aegean islands, the coast of Asia Minor, southern Italy and Sicily, and northern Africa.<sup>11</sup> In China, the Western Zhou court first wielded relatively strong rule over a league of regional states. These states were headed by relatives and allies of the royal house, who served as the court’s local agents despite enjoying considerable autonomy in civil, legal, and military affairs. After the first century or so of Western Zhou rule, and unquestionably after 771 BCE (the year the king died in a military action against an alliance of pastoral invaders and disaffected nobles and the court relocated to the east, hence the beginning of the Eastern Zhou), the regional states increasingly engaged in independent warfare and

<sup>10</sup> Murray (1980: 64) believes that “the *polis* already existed in all essential aspects by the end of the Dark Age.” For sources and general historical studies on the *polis*, see Ehrenberg (1969), Jones (1940), Murray and Price (1990), and Rhodes (1986). Under the leadership of Mogens Herman Hansen, the Copenhagen Polis Center (CPC) has, since its founding in 1993, produced many studies on the character and development of the *polis* (for a comprehensive list of its publications, see Hansen and Nielsen 2004: 191–193). On the distinctiveness of the *polis* among what Hansen calls “city-state cultures,” see the next section. It is estimated that there were about fifteen hundred *poleis* over a period of one thousand years (ca. 650–323 BCE) (Hansen 2006: 1–2).

<sup>11</sup> Finley (1977: 17) likens “the Greek world” to concepts of medieval Christendom and the present “Arab world.”

diplomacy. By the late Spring and Autumn period the authority of the Zhou court had become virtually nominal.<sup>12</sup> The Chinese world in the period of our discussion was centered in the northern plains, stretched across the Yangtze River in the south, and reached the coast in the east.

Political and territorial unity never existed in either ancient China or ancient Greece. Instead, it was the shared cultural bond among the smaller units in each land that gave each a distinctive tradition when set against those outside. According to a speech that Herodotus (ca. 485–425 BCE) attributes to the Athenians during the conflict between the Greeks and the Persians in the early fifth century BCE, there was a “Greek thing” (*to Hellēnikon*) defined by common blood, common language, common religion, and common customs and mores (*Histories*, 8.1.144). These claims may be open to challenge or may need qualification for a specific region, a certain population, or a particular time. However, it would be difficult to deny the existence of a “Greek way” or a pan-Hellenic identity, which becomes all the more compelling if we speak of perception (by the Greeks themselves or by others, contemporary or in later times) rather than of historical reality.<sup>13</sup> Summing up more than a decade of collaborative work at the Copenhagen Polis Center leading to an inventory of all known Greek *poleis* in the Archaic and classical periods, Mogens Herman Hansen states, “So the Greeks had a common culture and a fixed belief that they were a single people. And that justifies the proposition that all 1,500 *poleis* belonged to one and the same city-state culture, a proposition formulated with force and brevity by the poet Poseidippos: ‘there is only one Hellas, but there are many *poleis*.’”<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> An estimate is that there were more than one thousand regional states in the early Western Zhou; by the late Spring and Autumn period this number had been reduced to dozens because of the incessant wars of annexation that the states waged against each other (Lü Wenyu 2006: 20–21, 150–151).

<sup>13</sup> With respect to Herodotus’ claim that the Greeks were of the same stock, Finley (1984: 8) points out that, even though the ancient Greeks were a “thoroughly mixed stock,” “what matters socially and historically in the field of ‘race’ is not science but beliefs.” Elsewhere, Finley (1977: 18) sensibly states that “common civilization never meant absolute identity.” As he expounds, “there were differences in dialect, in political organization, in cult practices, often in morals and values, sharper in the peripheral areas, but by no means absent in the centre as well. Yet in their own eyes the differences were minor when measured against the common elements of which they were so conscious.” Hansen (2006: 36–37) affirms Herodotus’ claim along similar lines.

<sup>14</sup> Hansen (2006: 37).

The unity of the Chinese tradition should be understood in a similar way. Besides the regional cultures that flourished in the states there emerged “an underlying shared system of politicoreligious values, as well as homologies in the social organization of elites.”<sup>15</sup> This phenomenon is even more remarkable because it became more evident and widespread during the Spring and Autumn period, when the fall of the Western Zhou resulted in the weakening and eventual loss of any central political drive that might contribute to the forging of cultural solidarity. Although the notion of a China characterized by cultural homogeneity across geographical regions and social strata is inapplicable to the period of this inquiry (or, for that matter, to the two-millennium-long imperial period after 221 BCE), there nevertheless took place a “gradual process of amalgamation and fusion, one from relative disparity to relative uniformity” during the Zhou. This process occurred amid political disunity and thus testifies to the immense, and to a great extent independent, force of cultural cohesion.<sup>16</sup>

Within the six centuries covered in this study, the Archaic and classical periods (ca. 800–300 BCE) will be at the center of the examination of the Greek tradition. While this is a highly conventional chronological choice,<sup>17</sup> there are two reasons behind my decision to focus on these periods, as well as to cross over into the Hellenistic age from time to time.

First, there was clear and strong continuity in Greek social life before and after Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE), and what seemed to be

<sup>15</sup> Falkenhausen (1999: 542–544).

<sup>16</sup> Quoted from Blakeley’s (1977: 211) lengthy examination of the different sociopolitical traditions of the states during the Spring and Autumn period. F. Li (2006: 294) characterizes the increasingly widespread adherence to the Zhou ritual system during the Spring and Autumn period as a “spontaneous process in which the common Zhou cultural tradition was revered and followed in the newly rising regional political centers.” Chen Lai (2006: 18, 80) discusses Spring and Autumn culture as a double process of extension and crystallization of Western Zhou culture on the one hand and transmutation and new developments on the other. Pines (2002: 132–135), who comments on the closer ties among the various parts of the Zhou realm during the Spring and Autumn period despite the political disintegration, believes that the cultural developments during this period sowed the seeds for the quest for unity in the Warring States period.

<sup>17</sup> It is still common, despite much recent attention to the Hellenistic period, for discussions of Greek history and culture to concentrate on the four centuries or so between Homer and Alexander, which are usually taken to represent the Greek achievement. To privilege the Archaic and classical periods does not mean that scholars are unaware of the crucial role of the Hellenistic period in the spread of Greek civilization, and it is certainly incorrect to regard all developments in the later era as a simple continuation of Archaic and classical legacies.

strikingly new developments in sociability and gender relations in the later period often turned out to be merely different or more salient manifestations of an enduring feature that has been abundantly illustrated in the previous two periods. As has been pointed out, against the current trend emphasizing the changes during the Hellenistic period, the third and early second centuries BCE formed a continuum with the classical period in the ideas and institutions of Greek civic and private life, and a meaningful break occurred or became visible only afterwards.<sup>18</sup> The second reason is that the Archaic and classical periods effectively elucidate the most notable aspects of Greek sociability and gender relations and allow for the most instructive comparisons with the Chinese tradition. For example, from the perspective of a classicist, Kenneth Dover may have been justly criticized for omitting from his classic study of Greek homosexuality the postclassical period on the grounds that “the distinctive features of Greek civilisation were fully developed before the end of the classical period” and it is therefore not “useful to accumulate evidence which shows only that characteristically Greek attitudes and behavior survived for a long time as ingredients of a Greco-Roman cultural amalgam.”<sup>19</sup> However, from a comparative perspective, I find that the most compelling and the most economical strategy for approaching Greek sociability and gender relations is to focus on these two periods, which not only represented the height of Hellenic civilization for the Greeks themselves but also exerted the most lasting influences on the Western tradition. When I do go into the Hellenistic period, it will mainly be to search for supplementary and corroborative evidence or to illustrate the continuity of a certain aspect of the Greek tradition.

My discussion of the Chinese tradition will focus on the Western Zhou and the Spring and Autumn periods (ca. 1000–450 BCE). The Western Zhou, which precedes the times of China’s greatest early thinkers by several centuries, has not received much attention in China–Greece comparative research. Yet there is no denying the period’s significance not only for the foundation of Chinese culture in general but also in the realm of Chinese sociability and gender relations in particular. In

<sup>18</sup> Gauthier (1985), Shipley (2000, ch. 3), Van Bremen (2003). Under the Hellenistic kingdoms, democratic institutions such as the assemblies, city councils, and court-houses remained very much intact, and the religious festivals, athletic games, and gymnastic activities might have engaged people’s enthusiasm as much as before. See note 34 below.

<sup>19</sup> Dover (1978: 4). For criticism that Dover simplifies the picture by limiting himself to the two earlier periods, see Percy (2005).

that it gave China an ethnic core along with the basic paradigms for its system of political, ethical, religious, and ritual beliefs and practices, even as they continuously underwent transformation and renewal,<sup>20</sup> the Western Zhou was held up as the golden age of Chinese civilization until the fall of China's last dynasty in the early twentieth century. This study will bear out the crucial role of the Western Zhou in defining the structure and principles of Chinese sociability and gender relations. As for the Spring and Autumn period, it is important for our purposes because it brought about a steady and often creative crystallization and dissemination of the cultural values of the Western Zhou despite that period's political disunity and apparent cultural fragmentation.

Without implying that the subsequent Warring States era did not contribute critical new syntheses to the Western Zhou legacy, and without repeating my reasons for making short shrift of the Hellenistic period in discussing the Greek tradition, I shall simply quote Lothar von Falkenhausen on these eras: "As established structures [of the Western Zhou] underwent increasing stress, piecemeal modifications occurred; but even the thoroughgoing cultural transformation of the Warring States period left crucial parts of the Bronze Age heritage intact."<sup>21</sup>

In his introduction to *The Legacy of Greece* Moses Finley authoritatively declared that for the purpose of defining the legacy of the Greeks, "place, region, is largely a matter of indifference."<sup>22</sup> Statements of such tenor may no longer receive the unqualified approval of classicists or other scholars, and it is imperative to pay more attention to variations in place *and* in time for a nuanced understanding of any particular tradition. However, I believe that it also repays to look beyond internal distinctions and change to discern significant and persistent patterns within a tradition, as well as salient differences between traditions.<sup>23</sup> The

<sup>20</sup> Falkenhausen (2006), C-Y. Hsu (2005: 456), F. Li (2006: 293–296).

<sup>21</sup> Falkenhausen (1999: 543). More recently, with an eye on an overall narrative of increasing internal coalescence and demarcation of external boundaries in Chinese culture during the Zhou, Falkenhausen (2006) examines the changes and variations in Zhou social organization from the beginning through the Warring States period. F. Li (2006: 293–294) quotes Falkenhausen (1999: 543) with approval. M. E. Lewis (1997) affirms the same point in the ritual and symbolic realms, arguing that Zhou rituals provided the reforming kings and ministers of the Warring States period with a repertoire of ideas and images on which to draw for major institutional creations.

<sup>22</sup> Finley (1984: 2).

<sup>23</sup> In a conference volume entitled *The Cultures within Ancient Greek Culture: Contact, Conflict, Collaboration*, Dougherty and Kurke (2003: 6) advocate exploring diversity within Greek culture to understand how the processes of contact, conflict, and collaboration among subcultures "combine to comprise what we understand as 'Greekness.'"

relationship between broad generalization and change and variation is examined by Benjamin Schwartz, who finds himself poised between a strong bias “toward an insistence on the reality of historic change and the emergence of novelty within Chinese culture” and a need to identify “more or less enduring dominant cultural orientation[s].” Commenting on how the political order enjoyed a primacy and weight in East Asian societies without compare in other civilizations and cultures, Schwartz observes,

In fact, however, we may not be dealing with a dichotomy between mutually exclusive terms. The dominant cultural orientation operates on a high level of generality and it is most easily discerned when we contemplate the whole sweep of Chinese history. It is a general orientation which remains quite compatible with vast and significant changes operative within its wide boundaries.<sup>24</sup>

As the reader will see, the men and women in the following chapters hail from all over China and all corners of the Hellenic world and from across several centuries. They will show us in these pages how the Theban way, the Spartan way, the Lesbian way, and the Athenian way of sociability and gender relations converged into a Greek way, and how this Greek way entailed practices and ideas that set it apart from the Chinese way as embraced over the centuries by the male and female convivialists of Qi, Chu, Qin, Song, Jin, Zheng, and Lu. Of course, exceptions and inconsistencies, all of which call for specialist studies, will remain to defy the positing of two such broadly distinctive patterns and to testify to the awesome richness of human experience and the tremendous complexity of ancient Chinese and Greek civilizations. Nonetheless, it will be a special tribute to the vivacious men and women of the two ancient worlds to attempt to identify and celebrate their distinctive lifestyles and ways of organizing and thinking.

### The *Polis* and Lineage

If one were to name the best-known and most significant sociopolitical and cultural developments in Archaic Greece and Western Zhou

Maintaining a holistic view that recognizes “Greekness” will help put into the right perspective the effort to deconstruct the monolithic view that considers Greek culture as “something simple, pure, and unproblematic – as the beginning, the source of Western civilization” (Dougherty and Kurke 2003: 2). The same applies to the study of ancient China.

<sup>24</sup> Schwartz (1987: 1).

China that defined their roles in Greek and Chinese civilizations, one would have to cite the rise of the *polis* and the formation of what came to be known as the Lineage Law (*zongfa*) system. The crucial differences between the social structures, political ideologies, and ethical values associated with these two developments have an important bearing on this inquiry.

According to one recent definition, the *polis* was “a community of persons or, more precisely, citizens (a “Bürgerverband”), of place or territory, of cults, customs and laws, that was able to administer itself (fully or partly).”<sup>25</sup> The emphasis on participation by all members in the functioning of the civic community is perhaps what most distinguished the Greek *polis* from the variety of city-states in other parts of the ancient world, so much so that “citizen-state” has been suggested as a more accurate designation for the uniquely Greek type.<sup>26</sup> Writing on the emergence of the *polis* as a new social structure that emphasized a community of adult male citizens in the late eighth century BCE, Ian Morris notes, “the new pattern remained in place, albeit with considerable regional and temporal variations and always under pressure from competing models of what the community should be, for the next 500 years.”<sup>27</sup>

The nature of the *polis* as a civic community has long been thought to have had crucial implications for the role of the family institution and kinship ties in Greek society. In the still widely accepted nineteenth-century evolutionist model of social theory, the emergence of the *polis* as a political (literally, “of the *polis*”) order involved the lifting of the control that kinship, family, and other traditional ties of dependence had exerted on individuals and the forging of a new community of individuals who are equal and free (in the sense that the citizens take turns ruling and being ruled). In this model, the move from ascriptive and hierarchical kinship-based organizations to egalitarian and achievement-based

<sup>25</sup> Raaflaub (2005: 269).

<sup>26</sup> Raaflaub (2005: 269). Also see, among many others, Hansen (1998: 57–62), Morris (1987), and Vernant (1980, ch. 4) on the ideological emphasis on the *polis* as a political community, a sum of its citizens. Raaflaub (1998), with a host of other authorities on Archaic Greece, upholds the view that the “citizen-state” was “a specifically Greek creation” during a period when Greece was under many influences from neighboring cultures in the Mediterranean and the Near East.

<sup>27</sup> Morris (1992: 27). See statements to the same effect in Raaflaub (2005: 270, 275–276). Sealey (1987: 92–96) demonstrates the similarities in the governmental structure of all Greek *poleis*. Murray (1980: 57–68) and Raaflaub (1993), among others, hold that all the essential elements of the *polis* (such as the basic settlement pattern, the deliberative bodies of the assembly and council of elders, and the forms of religious ritual) are already present in Homer.

civic communities is regarded as a progressive one that characterized the Greeks as the harbingers of the modern condition.

More recent scholarship has seriously challenged the evolutionist assumptions of the nineteenth-century model, questioning both the supposed domination of corporate kinship organizations in the pre-*polis* period and the alleged full retreat of the family with the rise of the *polis*. It is pointed out that unilineal descent groups that are linked by kinship (whether actual or fictive) and bound by common property and religious cult never existed in either Archaic or classical Greece.<sup>28</sup> It has also been shown that instead of being “dismembered” by the newly arisen civic force, the family remained essential to the well-being of the city-state throughout Greek history.<sup>29</sup> The civic community rose to transcend but not to supplant membership in and allegiance to kinship and other rival groupings and ties. With the rise of the *polis*, there came into being a common domain (the *koinon* or *koinonia*) for civic life, including the assembly, agoras, sanctuaries, and gymnasias, a higher level of authority and allegiance over and above the family.<sup>30</sup> Riet van Bremen characterizes the status of the family in the civic ideology of the Hellenistic period, when the family’s importance was supposedly enhanced with the political decline of the *polis* under the imposition of monarchical rule, in the following passage:

In the public sphere households re-grouped themselves along lines of gender and age, forming in a certain sense a collective family of citizens. For civic purposes, families dissolved into collectives of men (*neoi*: young men, formed a separate and important group), women (referred to as *gynaiikes* or *politides*), boys of different ages (*paidēs*: young boys, *epheboi*: boys in their upper teens) and unmarried girls (*parthenoi*). This functional separation affected office-holding, including religious office-holding, and gave structure to civic and religious ritual and to the acculturation and education of (future) citizens.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Bourriot (1976), Donlan (2007), C. B. Patterson (1998: 47–50), and Roussel (1976). Two terms, “lineage” and “clan,” are customarily used in these discussions to refer to a corporate kinship organization. According to Roger M. Keesing’s (1976: 251) definitions, “A *lineage* is a descent group consisting of people patrilineally or matrilineally descended from a known ancestor through a series of links they can trace,” whereas “a larger descent category ... [consisting of people] who believe that they are descended from a common ancestor but do not know the actual connections is called a *clan*.”

<sup>29</sup> This is C. B. Patterson’s (1998) major conclusion in her attempt to debunk the evolutionist paradigm.

<sup>30</sup> Freeman (1999: 90); Herman (1987); Schmitt-Pantel (1990b); Vernant (1982, ch. 4).

<sup>31</sup> Van Bremen (2003: 322).



As van Bremen notes, what she writes of the Hellenistic period had long been an inherent feature of Greek society.<sup>32</sup> In the civic ideology of the *polis*, natural families dissolved into one civic family, and membership in the civic categories of collectives (men, women, boys, and unmarried girls – each category being associated with different civic identities and functions) was superimposed on kinship relationships. While family and kinship ties no doubt constituted essential bases of solidarity in the *polis*, every man, woman, boy, and girl also *individually* owned membership in and owed allegiance to a specific civic collective, and together these collectives made up the overarching “family of citizens.” Although there was indeed a turning away from politics and a greater emphasis on the family after Alexander’s conquest,<sup>33</sup> the nature of the change has to be construed properly in light of the continuing importance of the concept of the common domain in the Hellenistic period. In the centuries after Alexander, what van Bremen calls “civic family thinking” actually reached a culmination and public institutions concerned with the cultivation and articulation of separate civic identities for men, women, boys, and girls flourished.<sup>34</sup>

In short, from the Archaic period through the middle of the Hellenistic age, despite variations in the form of government and changes in the distribution of power, what remained constant for life in the *polis* was the important sense of partaking in the “common domain.” Depending on period and place, different kinds of collective activities (strictly political, communal but not political, or otherwise characterized) might play varying roles in fostering this consciousness,<sup>35</sup> but the highest status was

<sup>32</sup> Van Bremen (2003: 323).

<sup>33</sup> Efforts to highlight changes in families and in women’s lives in Hellenistic times can be found in Fantham et al. (1994, ch. 5), C. B. Patterson (1998, ch. 6), and Pomeroy (1997).

<sup>34</sup> Van Bremen (2003: 323, 329). The history of the Athenian *ephebeia*, a military-training institution for young adults (*ephebi*) before they formally joined the citizenry, illustrates what changed in the new times and what did not. Although militarily defunct by the end of the second century BCE, the *ephebeia* continued to flourish as an institution geared toward training youths for athletic and gymnastic competitions, and they constituted a powerful Hellenizing influence in the postclassical world (Garland 1990: 185; Hadas 1959: 26; Shipley 2000: 130). From the end of the fourth century BCE onward there also appeared young men’s associations, parallel to the evolving *ephebeia*, whose primary function seems to have been to encourage athletic contests, often in the form of team activities (Garland 1990: 202). On the significant growth of older institutions such as the gymnasia, agoras, theaters, and sanctuaries in the Hellenistic period, see Hornblower (1991: 275–276) and Shipley (2000: 86–87).

<sup>35</sup> The evolutionist paradigm, in lauding the birth of a separate and transcendent public sphere in ancient Greece, tends to focus on activities in such political institutions as the assemblies and law courts.

always granted those activities that aimed to create solidarity among and within the various civic groups.<sup>36</sup> While authority relationships (between the elite and the masses, and within the elite) were inherent in the collective pursuit of solidarity, even under a democracy,<sup>37</sup> the ideal of the cohesive and robust civic community was to be realized through egalitarian competition among its members, both individually and in civic groups of varying sizes and natures.

The different configuration of the relationships among various social spheres in Western Zhou China can be illustrated by what is commonly known as the Lineage Law system, which regulated the political and economic relationships within the aristocracy through a kinship structure and a code of religious and ritual practices.<sup>38</sup> The system was based on the distinction between the Main Line (also translated as the primary line, senior lineage, trunk lineage, etc.), descended through the eldest son of the principal wife (versus the father's other consorts of secondary status<sup>39</sup>), and the Minor Lines (also known as collateral lines, branch lineages, etc.), descended through the other sons. The Main Line enjoyed precedence over the Minor Lines in the inheritance of political authority and the distribution of economic, religious, and ritual privileges.<sup>40</sup> The resultant hierarchical kinship structure may be envisioned as a branching tree – each Minor Line forming a Main Line comprised of the head of a Minor Line and his offspring on the same principle of direct patrilineal descent.<sup>41</sup> This lineage system corresponded to the structure of the political system, in which the king granted his relatives

<sup>36</sup> Schmitt-Pantel (1990b) investigates the changing statuses of different types of collective practices in defining the civic community from the Archaic to the classical period.

<sup>37</sup> J. M. Hall (2007: 46); Ober (1989).

<sup>38</sup> Chapter 2 will cover the incorporation of the commoners in the Zhou sociopolitical ideology anchored in the Lineage Law system.

<sup>39</sup> Zhou rulers and high officials customarily married a single principal wife and multiple secondary consorts. This practice of polygyny, including its implications for Chinese gender relations and its differences from Greek concubinage, will be discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>40</sup> C-Y. Hsu (2001, ch. 5); Qian Hong (1991); Qian Zongfan (1989: 72–95); Yang Kuan (1999, ch. 6); Zhu Fenghan (2004: 309–337).

<sup>41</sup> The branching image may be found in the second stanza of Ode 235 (“Wen wang,” King Wen) in the *Book of Odes*, whose subject is King Wen, the illustrious founder of the Western Zhou dynasty. “Very diligent was King Wen, / His high fame does not cease; / He spread his bounties in Zhou, / And now in his grandsons and sons, / In his grandsons and sons / The stem has branched / Into manifold generations, / And all the noblemen of Zhou / Are glorious in their generation” (Cheng and Jiang 748; Waley 227).

and allies land and titles (with the most strategic regions of the kingdom going to lineage members), who in turn conferred appointments and other privileges (which, with the territorial expansion of the regional states in the Spring and Autumn period, increasingly included land) on their own descendants and close associates. The ruler at each level of the conical hierarchy that resulted was supposed to be the eldest son by his father's principal wife, while his ministers and retainers were supposed to be his uncles, brothers, cousins, and nephews.<sup>42</sup> As a matter of principle, and with some local variations (especially in those states that originally had relatively marginal status in the Zhou cultural sphere, such as Qin and Chu), the Main Line–Minor Lines distinction just explicated underscored the political organization of all of the regional states that recognized the authority of the Zhou court. Epitomizing the structural identity between the political and the familial was the person of the Zhou king, who in his rule represented the direct descent line of the dynastic founder and who was thus entitled to command the submission and support of his kinsmen and allies.<sup>43</sup>

Besides evincing a symbiosis of the political and familial orders, the institution of Lineage Law had religious underpinnings in ancestor worship. As suggested by archaeological evidence, ancestor worship may have been the Chinese people's most significant form of "religious mediation" from as early as the Neolithic Age.<sup>44</sup> Important Zhou innovations in ancestor worship were the exclusion of Minor-Line ancestors from services and the insistence that the Main Line be the ritual center for the patrilineal descent group.<sup>45</sup> Performed on numerous occasions throughout the year by members of the same patriline under the leadership of its head, ancestral rites were aimed at forging kinship solidarity

<sup>42</sup> Lü Wenyu (2006) provides a comprehensive survey of the enfeoffing practice in Zhou history.

<sup>43</sup> In his recent work, Feng Li (2008) characterizes the Western Zhou as a "delegatory kin-ordered settlement state," in which the Zhou king delegated his power to the regional states through a kinship structure and the "social organization of the lineages was transferred into the political organization" (quote on p. 296).

<sup>44</sup> Keightley (1998).

<sup>45</sup> On ancestor worship in the preceding Shang dynasty, see Chang Yuzhi (1987) and Keightley (1978, 1998, 2000). K-C. Chang (1976, ch. 5), Puett (2002: 50–68), Wang Guimin (1998: 380–381), and Wang Hui (2000, ch. 4) discuss both continuities and changes in Western Zhou ancestral practices. The mid-to-late Western Zhou (the mid-tenth through mid-ninth centuries BCE) has been widely recognized as the key period in which the major ritual innovations of the Zhou took place (e.g., Falkenhausen 2006; Rawson 1999a). Kern (2009a) offers a stratified view of the evolution of ancestor worship during the Western Zhou.

and reaffirming people's identities and obligations as defined by their roles in the descent line. The image of the Zhou king and his subordinates worshipping in the ancestral temple illustrates not only how the familial and the sociopolitical orders mirrored each other but also how religion provided both supernatural sanction for and the means to enact the symbiotic relationship between the political and the familial.<sup>46</sup> Generally speaking, whereas Greek religion (in its primary form as festivals and sacrifices honoring the gods) did not provide either a value system for or norms of political or ethical conduct, Chinese ancestor worship did furnish the religious underpinnings and moral rationale for both the polity and the family.<sup>47</sup>

The collapse of the Western Zhou in 771 BCE and the increasing political fragmentation over the next few centuries triggered the gradual demise of the Lineage Law system. By the Warring States period, the household (*jia*, coresidential domestic unit that consisted of a married couple, their minor children, and probably one or two grandparents) had replaced the larger kinship organizations (*zong* or *shi*) of the old lineage system as the basic social unit and economic and ritual center.<sup>48</sup> Radical as this transformation proved to be, however, some essential values pertaining to the Lineage Law system survived, often in new forms. Mark Lewis, who calls the Spring and Autumn period China's "age of the city-state" and argues that the period was characterized by the decline in kinship's political role, the prevalence of collegial authority among the nobility, and the greater role of the populace in times of political crisis, acknowledges that no alternative forms of authority or of political

<sup>46</sup> Chen Lai (2006: 9–10) calls such symbiosis "rare" in ancient world civilizations. Chapter 2 will discuss how the political, religious, and familial homology here illustrated at the aristocratic level anchors the Zhou sociopolitical ideology that incorporates the commoners.

<sup>47</sup> On Greek religion's not providing ethical norms, see Raaflaub (2005: 276). Scholars differ as to whether ancestor worship already had an ethical dimension in the Western Zhou or acquired that dimension only in the Spring and Autumn period (Holzman 1998: 2; Hsu 2005: 456; Knapp 1995: 201–204; Pines 2002: 188–194; Zha Changguo 1993; Zhang Jijun 2008: 63–66). I agree with the Western Zhou argument. Whereas perhaps unsystematically articulated, the Western Zhou sources clearly indicate that the rites associated with ancestor worship had implications for daily ethical conduct (see Chapters 2 and 3 for detailed discussion). See A. C. Yu (2004) for an examination of the entwined relationships among religion, ethics, and the state in Chinese history.

<sup>48</sup> Li Hengmei (1999: 306–315); M. E. Lewis (2006a, ch. 2); Zhu Fenghan (2004: 559–575).

participation emerged during those centuries.<sup>49</sup> In explaining why the new developments that he identifies in China's "age of the city-state" left little trace in later history, Lewis points to the "lingering presence of the Zhou monarchy as ritual reality and political idea."<sup>50</sup> For our purposes, there are two points with respect to the lasting legacy of the Western Zhou's kinship-based sociopolitical model that are worth nothing.

First, following the breakdown of the Lineage Law system, the head of the patrilineal household replaced the head of the Main Line as the focus of the political, economic, and ritual activities associated with the family. Although the strong drives of the emergent large territorial states to harness the family as a potentially contentious political and economic entity during the Warring States period greatly changed the morphology and function of the institution and added tension to the relationship between the political and the familial, a reconfigured homology between the two remained the foundation for both ethics and political ideology in China. The "higher authority" that the state during the Warring States period (and afterward) attempted to wrest from the family institution never produced an autonomous civic community or a privileged common domain.<sup>51</sup> Second, the concept of filial

<sup>49</sup> M. E. Lewis (2006a: 138–150). As M. E. Lewis (2006a: 149) points out, the general populace never attempted to rule as a group and there never developed any theory of the autonomous city in early China. Yates (1997: 76), who also applies the term "city-state" to ancient China, acknowledges that the Chinese polities so characterized did not have a free citizen body. I shall argue in Chapter 2 that citizenship, which was an essential aspect of the Greek *polis*, was alien to ancient Chinese sociopolitical conceptions.

<sup>50</sup> M. E. Lewis (2006a: 149). Lewis's discussion on pp. 149–150 aims at distinguishing Spring and Autumn period Chinese "city-states" from the Greek *polis*, which is widely regarded as the paradigm of the city-state. Recent comparative studies (notably, those conducted at the Copenhagen Polis Center; see note 10 above) have attempted to place the *polis* in a world-historical context of different types of "city-state cultures," but the *polis* is clearly treated as the model against which other forms are compared. Regardless of whether we call Spring and Autumn China an age of the city-state, it is crucial, with Lewis, to recognize the fundamental differences between a Chinese regional state and the *polis*.

<sup>51</sup> As is widely recognized, filial piety tended to enjoy precedence over loyalty to the state in people's conceptions in the preimperial era, particularly before the middle of the Warring States period (Knapp 1995; Lin Suying 2003; Zhang Jijun 2008: 143). The tension between allegiance to the family and allegiance to the state was to become one of the most enduring and vexing moral issues for Chinese thinkers and statesmen during the imperial era (see Feng 1998 [1931]; Guo Qiyong 2004; Q. Liu 2003; Tan 2002). Two points are noteworthy from a comparative perspective. First, the Chinese state was never conceived as a political community that equaled the sum of its citizens, and the relationship between the rulers and the ruled was considered analogous to

piety, which withstood the collapse of traditional norms and centuries of profound sociopolitical changes, received new interpretations by thinkers and statesmen of various persuasions and purposes, and reemerged during the Warring States period as a pivotal virtue that carried ethical, religious, and political imperatives.<sup>52</sup>

The homology in China among the political, the religious, and the familial, and the lack of a Chinese equivalent for the Greek idea of the common domain are, I believe, a critical difference between the Chinese and Greek social orders.<sup>53</sup> The tenacious Chinese homology

the relationship between parents and children. Second, Chinese reflections and solutions concerning the unresolvable tension tended to be expressed through the deeds of heroes and sages presented in such a way that they highlighted familial duties and sentiments as the fundamental moral imperatives in Chinese society. In contrast, in Greece, Antigone, a woman and thus supposed to be primarily a domestic being, best embodied such conflict and was the most eloquent spokesperson for family interests vis-à-vis the state. Humphreys (1983: 72) suggests that the depiction of Antigone represents “a way of exploring the implications of placing the central meaning of life in the private sphere, without arousing all the ambiguous reactions which the audience would feel if presented with a male hero taking this stance.” On the Antigone story’s enduring legacy in Western literature, philosophy, and art, see Steiner (1984). In a recent study focused on Spring and Autumn and Warring States warfare, Zhao Dingxin (2006) examines the crucial role of those centuries of incessant and inconclusive wars among the states in creating a strong state that was able both to fuse political power and ideological power and to marginalize economic and military power. This development, Zhao argues, would shape the entire history of imperial China. While agreeing with Zhao on the important functions of war during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods in the formation of China’s distinctive and exceptionally resilient sociopolitical order, I believe that the war-driven development reconfigured, rather than created, the homology under discussion.

<sup>52</sup> For discussions of the evolution of the concept of filial piety from the Western Zhou to the Warring States period, see Kang Dewen (1997), Knapp (1995), Pines (2002: 188–199), and Zhang Jijun (2008: 137–145). Holzman (1998: 4) observes that by the mid-fourth century BCE filial piety had become a “very special kind of virtue, one that overrode almost any other considerations.” Chen Lai (2006: 10) distinguishes between a political level and a social level in analyzing the collapse of the Lineage Law system from the late Spring and Autumn period onward. As he argues, the collapse occurred only at the political level; at the social level, the way of organizing relationships as stipulated in the Lineage Law system remained intact. Li Xiangping (1991: 220–223) makes the same point in discussing the changing significance of ancestor worship from the mid-Spring and Autumn through the Warring States period.

<sup>53</sup> Arnason (2005: 47–48), distinguishing between state formation in ancient China and in ancient Greece, argues that whereas in Greece the process was “uniquely self-limiting, oriented toward a fusion of the state with the political community and a systematic minimization of monopolizing trends,” in China the process was marked by the state’s “exceptionally strong” monopolizing trends. Although Arnason’s formulation appropriately characterizes the Greek case, I believe it is more accurate to identify the source of China’s monopolizing dynamic in the Chinese homology between the political, the familial, and the religious. In China the familial provided the cornerstone

defies the popular distinction in Western political thought, based on the Greek example, between prestate society, where the economy, politics, and religion are all “familized,” and state society, marked by the emergence of a separate public political order and the suppression and privatization of the family.<sup>54</sup> It is no wonder that modern Chinese scholars, when first exposed to Western political thought, puzzled over the nature of premodern Chinese society, which, despite China’s sophisticated government system, apparently had remained for several thousand years largely a polity organized by kinship principles.<sup>55</sup> Nor is it surprising that other modern thinkers, Chinese and Western, should conclude that, dominated by family ethics, China was never a genuine political entity and could never have developed a civil society between family and state.<sup>56</sup> Whatever the value judgments about China’s aberrance that nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars conveyed from the perspective of Western political theory, the challenging questions that the evolutionist paradigm poses about how to understand the striking differences between the sociopolitical models of the two great traditions remain.

I approach this challenge by taking the perspective of gender and trying to uncover the links between gender relations and the larger structures of solidarity and authority in ancient China and Greece. How did the distinct relationships among the major social realms in the two traditions shape their different patterns of gender relations? What was it like for men and women to live in a society where they formed two

institution and ideology that preempted competition from the other forces and ties that could be found in the Greek common domain.

<sup>54</sup> Comaroff (1987: 63); Elshtain (1993).

<sup>55</sup> Yan Fu (1854–1921), who is most famous for introducing to China the works of Thomas Huxley, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, and Herbert Spencer, once observed that, even though Chinese society had evolved into an empire after the Qin and Han dynasties, in the end it remained “seventy percent a lineage organization and thirty percent an empire” (Liang Shuming 2003: 18–19). Lei Haizong (1902–1962) (1940) argues that for most of its history China was a family-dominated society and the Warring States period was the only era in which the state constituted a true political entity. Of course, the kind of totalitarian political power wielded by the state and the lack of any notion of citizenship during the Warring States period were nothing like the equation between the state and the civic community in ancient Greece.

<sup>56</sup> Hegel is the most famous Western proponent of this view (see earlier). Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), during his visit to China in 1920/1921, remarked that China was a cultural entity, not a state (Liang Shuming 2003: 29). On discussions among Chinese intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century (Yan Fu and Liang Qichao [1873–1929] being their most eminent representatives) about the lack of civil society in premodern China, see Liu and Liu (1997) and F-S. Wang (1997).

separate collectives in a “civic family” as compared to living in a society where kinship and family ties determined the structure and values of the political and religious orders? How will examining their different patterns of gender relations enhance our understanding of the value systems and key sociopolitical institutions of the two traditions?<sup>57</sup>

### Gender and Sociability

A study of gender relations in ancient China and Greece must start with the fundamental principle of sexual separation. According to this rule, men and women move in different physical spaces, engage in different activities, and have different responsibilities and rules of conduct. The spatial separation, typically expressed in terms of a contrast between “inner” (female, the house) and “outer” (male, outside of the house), provided both a physical basis and a metaphor for the distinction in gender roles and virtues.<sup>58</sup> To be sure, the dichotomies thus established could not have been as clear-cut in real life. Even barring unusual circumstances, such as times of war or social chaos,<sup>59</sup> there were always exceptions due to factors such as the age, familial role, or socioeconomic status of a woman. Furthermore, as will be seen in later chapters, there were numerous socially and ritually sanctioned occasions for the temporary relaxation of the rule of sexual separation. However, although Chinese and Greek women were never “locked away,” and although women doubtless engaged in certain trades and public roles, it cannot be denied that in both societies wives, mothers, and daughters constituted the primary social roles available to women and that the home was where the women fulfilled most of their duties and exerted their greatest influences.<sup>60</sup> The instances of exception and relaxation gain

<sup>57</sup> In her call to probe the specific contents of familial bonds instead of demonstrating universal principles of domestic groupings, Rosaldo (1980: 408) suggests that questions on “how varying relationships within the home might influence relationships outside it” be asked.

<sup>58</sup> Classic textual formulations: *Book of Changes*, ch. 37 (“household”); Xenophon, *Oikonomikos*, Book 7. Studies: Hinsch (2003); Just (1989, ch. 6); Raphals (1998, chs. 8 and 9); Vernant (1983); Walker (1983).

<sup>59</sup> For example, Pomeroy (1975: 119) speculates that the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE) may have caused a temporary breakdown of sexual decorum, forcing women to abandon seclusion and take up tasks formerly performed by men.

<sup>60</sup> Priestesses, who enjoyed high social prestige and typically came from families of noble lineages, were among the few women who played public roles in Greece. However, the priesthood was not a lifetime position in Greece. After serving her term, a priestess returned to her normal family life. In the Chinese case, many women served as



significance precisely because they testify to what was supposed to be normal and normative; instead of undermining or belying the rule, they reveal to us the complexity and flexibility of its workings.

A basic observation of this study is that while the ancient Chinese and Greek societies were both governed by principles of sexual separation and male domination, two distinct patterns of sociability – of how men and women related to each other both across the gender line and within the same sex group on the occasions intended for the collective cultivation of social bonds – appear in the extant sources for the two traditions. How and why this was so is the focus of this study, and some preliminary points regarding my ideas, concerns, and methods follow.

First, I consider “gender relations” (defined in this study as relationships between men and women) together with relationships among men and relationships among women. The three cannot be considered in isolation. Because of sexual separation and overwhelming male domination in both societies, how men bonded with each other had crucial implications for gender relations,<sup>61</sup> and the way that women related to each other not only followed from but also helped to mold the patterns of gender relations. Four types of relationships can be examined in accordance with the gender of the people involved and the sexual or nonsexual nature of their relationships: homosocial, homosexual, heterosocial, and heterosexual. Furthermore, since women’s ascribed role was familial and since the house was supposed to define the parameters of women’s activities and duties, social relationships naturally fall into two large categories: within the family and outside of the family. Table 1.2 shows the resultant eight combinations of interpersonal relationships.

The familial relationships in Table 1.2 are straightforward and require little explanation. The extrafamilial heterosocial category barely existed in the two societies where regular association between unrelated men and women was prohibited and any such relationship was automatically expected to entail a sexual transaction (through adultery or prostitution).

officials in the king’s palace, taking charge of its daily operation. Yet despite their official titles, these women functioned in the capacity of king’s consorts and were essentially running a household of special status.

<sup>61</sup> Seeing irony in the fact that “the turn toward ‘women’s studies’ in the China field seems to have encouraged a turn *away* from studies of men,” Mann (2000: 1600–1603) advocates considering relations among men as a legitimate subject of gender analysis.

TABLE 1.2. *Categories of interpersonal relationships*

	Homosocial	Homosexual	Heterosocial	Heterosexual
Familial	Father–son, mother–daughter, brothers, sisters, uncle–nephew, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, sisters-in-law, etc.	NA	Mother–son, father–daughter, brother–sister, etc.	Husband–wife
Extra-familial	Friends, associates, neighbors, fellow citizens, etc.	Male lovers, female lovers	NA	Courtesans and patrons

The categories of extrafamilial homosocial and extrafamilial homosexual relationships, however, and the connection between the two, call for clarification. While a sexual component is crucial in distinguishing between “homosexual” and “homosocial” in their application to our contemporary society, the same discontinuity cannot be assumed in other societies and historical periods. The ancient Greeks conceived of such ties as civic fellowship (bonds between citizens that sustained the unity of the city) and male homoeroticism (manifested mainly in pederasty, in which an adult man acted as the lover and mentor of a male adolescent in the latter’s socialization process) as being on a continuum.<sup>62</sup> The Greek socialization and politicization of homoerotic relationships was not attested in China, but neither was there a conceptual or moral opposition between the homosocial and the homosexual. In China, sexual passion between two persons of the same sex did not occupy enough of a social niche to become an object of heated contention (as in the modern West) or of active appropriation (as in ancient Greece).<sup>63</sup> For

<sup>62</sup> I will elaborate on this point in Chapter 1. Hartsock (1983, ch. 8) characterizes the *polis* as a community constituted by male Eros. I follow the current practice in classical studies in using the Greek term “pederasty” to refer to the institutionalized relationships between adult males and adolescent boys in ancient Greece, which had both a pedagogical function and an erotic dimension. Davidson (2007, ch. 3) painstakingly argues that Greek “pederasty” was not necessarily “intergenerational” because it often involved partners who were just a few years apart in age and the close relationship established in pederastic courtship could continue for years afterward. A distinction should be made between the Greeks’ practices and understanding of pederasty and the negative perceptions of pederasty in postclassical times and into the contemporary period (for a genealogical analysis, see Foucault 1985, 1986).

<sup>63</sup> On male homoeroticism in Chinese history, see Hinsch (1990) and C. Wu (2004).

different reasons, therefore, it is unnecessary to insist on explaining the existence or absence of a sexual dimension in extrafamilial bonds between individuals of the same sex in either ancient China or ancient Greece.<sup>64</sup> Throughout this study, the term “extrafamilial homosocial” will be used to refer to a spectrum of bonds that covers social relationships ranging from that of close friends, fellow citizens, and associates in formal and informal organizations to pederastic partners and other individuals of the same sex engaged in erotic or quasi-erotic liaisons (the language of homosexuality and homoeroticism will, however, be applied to this last category when the erotic element is explicit in the sources being discussed). With or without a sexual component, between adults or between adults and adolescents, extrafamilial homosocial ties constitute a primary alternative category of social relationships vis-à-vis family and kinship relations.

The category of extrafamilial heterosexual relationships in Table 1.2 essentially refers to the connections between professional female entertainers and their male patrons. Despite the obvious interest this category of relationships should command for a study on gender and sociability, I made the difficult decision to leave it outside the scope of this inquiry, following the guidelines that governed my choice of the types of interpersonal relationships to focus on. That is, I privileged those relationships that allow cross-cultural generalizations and have the support of evidence that both yields insights into the thoughts of the ancient agents or observers and is of comparable quantity and quality for the two traditions. Professional entertainers and their patrons are excluded from this study because the state of the evidence makes

<sup>64</sup> In her work on male homosocial desire in English literature, Sedgwick (1985, ch. 1) warns against the anachronistic conceptual distinction between the homosocial and the homosexual by invoking the example of the ancient Greeks. Davidson (2007) criticizes the influential Dover paradigm for equating Greek homosexuality with male sexual relationships (an approach that he derides as “a poetics of sodomy,” p. 104) and thus trivializing it and severing it from the complex sociopolitical background within which the phenomenon should be understood. Our points of departure and our purposes are different, and I do not share all of Davidson’s views. (Davidson attempts to downplay pederasty as the institutionalized and idealized form of male same-sex bonding in Greek society. Instead, he establishes adult homosexual pairing, which in the opinions of most classicists lacked social recognition let alone idealization, as the most inspiring and enduring legacy of Greek homosexuality.). However, Davidson’s emphasis on the public context and emotional dimension of male homoeroticism in Greece is a good corrective to some scholars’ preoccupation with the sexual element. As will be explained presently, in my study the category of extrafamilial homosocial bonds (for both males and females) comprises both homoerotic ties and other types of same-sex relationships, and the two may be intertwined.

it impossible to meet these criteria. A few more words are necessary to justify my reluctant decision.

The presence of the courtesans (*hetairai*, high-class prostitutes hired to provide entertainment and sexual service) at the Greek symposium (all-male drinking party) is extensively attested in literary and artistic representations from the sixth century BCE onward.<sup>65</sup> Did Greek men adore the talented and charming courtesans for giving them the kind of emotional and intellectual satisfaction that they could not obtain from their wives, who generally lacked not only education but also the skills to please men? Or, were the real rivals of the wives not the courtesans, who were merely for sensual gratification, but the boys whom Greek men admired and courted in pederastic relationships? Socially accepted relationships between courtesans and their customers clearly had significant implications for family life and conjugal relations in ancient Greece. My decision not to deal with this category of relationship follows from the consideration that there is no comparable evidence in Chinese sources about the activities of similar professionals in the centuries under discussion.

The “oldest profession on earth” had certainly existed in China since early times. However, all available evidence suggests that the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE) was the first time that professional courtesans, through commercial prostitution, began to play an indispensable role in Chinese sociable activities and literary imagination. Before then, and certainly in the period of this study, records about the women who sang, danced, and provided sexual services at male gatherings show those entertainers to be maintained either by the government for official functions or in individual households to supply hospitality or domestic entertainment.<sup>66</sup> In the former case, only a highly restricted circle of men (e.g., officials and soldiers) had access to the regulated services of the entertainers; in the latter case, the entertainers occupied an ambiguous status between servant and concubine. In either instance, the relationship between the woman and her patron was very different from that in ancient Greece or in later Chinese history (although governments and households remained major sponsors of female entertainers even after the rise of commercial prostitution in the Tang). A set of factors may have accounted for the difference between the primary channels of

<sup>65</sup> See Davidson (1997), Faraone and McClure (eds., 2006), Keuls (1985: 160–168), Kurke (1997), Stewart (1997).

<sup>66</sup> Wang Shunu (1935); Zheng Zhimin (1997); Zhou Jiren (1993: 44–46).

extrafamilial heterosexual relationships open to men in ancient China and Greece. On the one hand, ancient Chinese society was characterized by the presence of the state and the family as the major controllers of human and material resources and by the relative weakness of all other social forces and organizations (which partly found expression in a relatively low degree of commercialization and urbanization).<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, in Greece, where a more complex constellation of social forces existed and egalitarianism lay at the heart of the civic ideology, there was an entrenched sense of a common domain open to all, including professional female entertainers providing commercialized sexual services.<sup>68</sup>

While I believe that my speculative explanation for the disparity in the development of commercial prostitution in ancient Greece and China identifies fundamental differences between the two societies and is worthy of further exploration, at this stage I am unable to establish systematic and satisfactory correlations between the disparity and the distinct patterns of gender relations that I have deduced for the two societies. It requires a thorough study that juxtaposes the history of prostitution and the history of the family in China, and compares the finding with those for ancient Greece and perhaps for other premodern societies that have similar gender structures to generate a hypothesis about the relationship between commercial prostitution and conjugal relations in these societies. That task is well beyond the scope of this inquiry.

As already noted, a further reason that led me to leave female entertainers (professional or otherwise) out of the picture is that in the early Chinese sources there were few testimonies about their presence let alone about their interactions and emotional engagement with their

<sup>67</sup> Wang Daqing (2006: 39–40) contrasts the domination of commerce by political power in the ancient Chinese city with the independent status of commercial interests in the ancient Greek city. M. E. Lewis (2006a: 149) invokes the relative weakness of merchants and of merchant wealth to explain why the city did not develop as a distinct and autonomous form of social organization in early China. In their attempt to explain why physical education was promoted much more heavily in ancient Greece than in ancient China, Wooyeal and Bell (2004) propose as one important reason that the material surplus of largely commercial societies and greater freedom from family obligations in Greece provided sufficient leisure time for a class of male citizens to devote themselves to training for physical excellence and participating in athletic competitions, whereas the largely agricultural political economies and the primacy of family obligations in China were not conducive to the promotion of such pursuits. On the rapid development of purely commercial transactions unbound by personal and quasi-familial ties in the second half of the Tang dynasty, see J. Gernet (1995: 276).

<sup>68</sup> Halperin (1990, ch. 5).

patrons. Thus it is difficult to infer their role in men's lives (other than as objects of exchange and the backdrop for male joviality<sup>69</sup>) or their importance for an understanding of gender relations in ancient China. The females whom we will encounter in the following chapters are so-called respectable women: mothers, wives, and daughters. To be sure, the lively presence of these female convivialists deserves a full study and is sufficient to generate a systematic comparison between the two traditions. Moreover, I believe that my findings based on these "respectable women," who were by far more numerous and more relevant to the functioning of society than the female entertainers were, will yield patterns of gender relations into which the "disreputable" women can be fit when we have gained a better understanding of their role in ancient China.

The same guidelines that governed my choice of categories of interpersonal relationships also led me to focus on certain types of sociable occasions, both domestic and extradomestic, as the stage for interactions between men and women, among men, and among women. The differences between ancient China and Greece can be brought out by analyzing not only the unique sociable forms of the two traditions but also the settings that were common to both. Striking examples of the former are the ancestral sacrifices in China and the athletic competitions and festival choral performances in Greece, whereas the shared occasions include family banquets, men's drinking parties, and festivities in honor of deities. By examining gender relations against a broad array of sociable contexts, this study will shed new light on some important aspects of ancient Greek and Chinese societies, including religion, politics, and ethics.

*Religion.* Scholars have repeatedly made strong statements about the all-pervading presence of religion in Greek sociability. For example, Pauline Schmitt-Pantel remarks that "religion is present in all the different levels of [Greek] social life, and all collective practices have a religious dimension," and a state-of-the-field essay by André Vauchez states that classical studies since the nineteenth century have made it clear that in Greece "no form of sociability escaped the hold of religion."<sup>70</sup> Be it in the form of a festival, a choral performance, or a symposium,

<sup>69</sup> Texts such as *Zuo's Commentary* and the *Intrigues of the Warring States* contain numerous records in which female entertainers are offered as gifts among the ruling elite, often along with musical instruments and other items of luxury.

<sup>70</sup> Schmitt-Pantel (1990b: 200); Vauchez (1987: 9–10, 11, 13). This line of thinking goes back to Fustel de Coulanges' (1980) classic work *The Ancient City*, first published in 1864.

the celebration took place under the eyes of the gods and the mortal celebrants of Hellas forged ties with each other at the same time as they established communication with the divine. Religion likewise enjoyed central significance in Chinese sociability, although huge differences from Greek religious or religion-informed occasions and their ethical-political implications obtained. Whereas the public festivals of a civic and intensely competitive character dominated in ancient Greece, in ancient China ancestor worship, the domestic religion par excellence, was the most important form of religious activity. As I shall argue, insofar as religion was a crucial area in which women could gain formal public recognition for their contributions to society, the great differences between Chinese and Greek religious sociability provide a key to our understanding of the distinct patterns of gender relations in the two traditions.<sup>71</sup>

*Politics.* In ancient Greece, the symposia and group activities organized for male youths functioned as avenues for “socialization and apprenticeship in political life” and for “apprenticeship in civic values” not only by transmitting knowledge, values, and skills but also by adopting the models of the city-state’s political institutions in their protocols.<sup>72</sup> The future citizens who would deliberate and vote in the assembly and fight on the battlefield were groomed through various sociable activities, and their participation on those occasions after reaching their majority would mark their full membership in the civic community. In contrast to the importance of moving among one’s peers for the making of the Greek citizen, in ancient China the family served as the crucial site for the inculcation of social and political virtues. Insofar as the societies of ancient China and Greece were sustained by distinct means of socialization and political reproduction, women occupied different places in the two sociopolitical orders even though they participated as mothers, wives, and daughters in both.

*Ethics.* Sociable occasions often throw into high relief the values and rules that shape interpersonal relationships and guide people’s actions under normal circumstances. However, they are also likely, their purported aims notwithstanding, to offer a stage for the enactment of tensions and conflicts *as well as* of affinities. What form the tensions and conflicts take, who experiences them, and why they arise are questions

<sup>71</sup> It is Émile Durkheim’s (1858–1917) (1976) fundamental insight that religious beliefs and practices replicate and reinforce social experience.

<sup>72</sup> Schmitt-Pantel (1990b: 206). Also see Murray (1983a, 1983b).

that are just as, if not more, interesting than identifying the ideals and ethical norms of a society. The full richness of the concept of sociability can emerge if sociability is understood in terms of a striving – which implies obstacles and efforts to overcome them – for cohesion and harmony. Banquets and festivals have special import because they often display not only the pursuit of solidarity but also, inevitably, a clash of interests, aspirations, and personalities. In view of the significance of sexual separation in China and Greece, I am especially interested in how sociable practices furnished unique opportunities for unfolding all aspects – rapport and conflict, attachment and alienation, affection and resentment – of gender relations. I seek to add depth and complexity to the well-known, no doubt true, but also often misconstrued, contrast between the Greek penchant for rivalry and the Chinese love of harmony.<sup>73</sup> As an ideal for the social order and for interpersonal relationships harmony appealed to *both* the Chinese and the Greeks, but they had very different understandings of the nature of harmony, dealt with discontent and discord differently, and tended to form alliances or enter into conflict with different types of people and in different ways. The interpersonal affinities and conflicts analyzed in this study will help us reach a fresh understanding of the conventional wisdom that sinologists, classicists, and now China–Greece comparatists have held about the most distinctive characteristics of the two civilizations.

This study will show that both between the sexes and among individuals of the same sex, and both within the family and outside of it, two separate patterns of sociability may be discerned in ancient Greek and Chinese sources. Whereas intense sexual rivalry (both positively and negatively portrayed), strong extrafamilial homosocial bonds, and close mother–daughter ties characterize Greek materials, the evidence from China exhibits a lower level of gender conflict, greater concern for the relationships among the wives of the family, and much weaker extrafamilial homosocial ties. Tables 1.3 and 1.4 summarize the sets of

<sup>73</sup> The Greeks and the Chinese have long been identified with two different sets of values: whereas the Greeks are famed for their dynamism and love of competition, the Chinese are well known for their orientation toward authority and harmony. In works that compare Greek and Chinese science, medicine, and historiography, and in his book co-authored by Nathan Sivin, Geoffrey Lloyd has tried to account for the familiar contrast by moving beyond invocations of “cultural mentalities” in old East–West comparisons and referring instead to the different relationships between political and social forces in Greece and China (G. Lloyd 1996, 2002, 2004; G. Lloyd and Sivin 2002).



TABLE 1.3. *Interpersonal relationships in ancient China (ancestor-descendant tie as basic model for human solidarity)\**

Affinity	Conflict
<b>Familial intergenerational heterosocial relations (mother–son)</b>	<b>Familial homosocial relations (II) (mother-in-law–daughter-in-law, among wives and consorts of same generation)</b>
Familial homosocial relations (I) (mother–daughter)	
Extrafamilial homosocial relations	Familial heterosexual relations (husband–wife)

\* Boldface indicates “relatively strong”; normal font indicates “relatively weak.”

TABLE 1.4. *Interpersonal relationships in ancient Greece (peer equality and rivalry as basic model for human solidarity)\**

Affinity	Conflict
Familial intergenerational heterosocial relations (mother–son)	Familial homosocial relations (II) (mother-in-law–daughter-in-law)
<b>Familial homosocial relations (I) (mother–daughter)</b>	
<b>Extrafamilial homosocial relations</b>	<b>Familial heterosexual relations (husband–wife)</b>

\* Boldface indicates “relatively strong”; normal font indicates “relatively weak.”

affinities and conflicts in women-centered interpersonal relationships recorded in ancient Chinese and Greek sources.

Although other relationships also were integral to the nexus of interpersonal affinities and rivalries that women entered into in ancient China and Greece, the categories outlined in Tables 1.3 and 1.4 were the most crucial to the formation of gender dynamics in the two societies and also are the best supported by available evidence. Moreover, the characterization of a certain relationship by affinity or rivalry in China or in Greece has to be understood as relative, not as an absolute or essentialist judgment. For example, I argue that when sources about ancient China and Greece are set side by side, we cannot fail to be struck by depictions of Greek conjugal rivalry and intense female friendships on the one hand and Chinese mother–son affinity and attempts to regulate the relationship among the family’s wives (both intra- and

intergenerational) on the other. This by no means suggests that Greek mothers and sons were not attached to each other, or Chinese women had no friends outside of the house, or Greek husbands and wives liked to quarrel, or the wives and mothers of the Chinese family were always antagonists, or Greek mothers-in-law had no problems with their sons' wives, and so forth. What we do know from the comparison is how in ancient China and Greece relationships were perceived differently and associated with distinct values and degrees of importance and how their dissimilar propensities for affinity and conflict were conditioned by different institutional and structural factors.

### Representation and Reality

Pauline Schmitt-Pantel, an advocate of using sociability as a perspective for studying Greek society and the author of a major work on public festivities in the ancient Greek city, once observed that "there is no context or form of Greek sociability that was not also the object of representations in the civic imaginary."<sup>74</sup> Representation and ideology, along with the institutional frameworks within which the images and discourses were created, are the focus of this study. My major concerns are the ideas and sentiments that the ancient Chinese and Greeks expressed about human relationships and social values, and the patterns of solidarity and conflict, with a concentration on gender, that emerge in their representations of sociable activities. Literary texts will be my major sources. The genre that I shall most heavily depend upon in both traditions is lyric poetry. In the Chinese case, the poems come from the *Book of Odes* (*Shi, Shijing*), which, dated between ca. 1000 and ca. 600 BCE, was the fountainhead of Chinese literature and a centerpiece in the education and social life of the elite through the Spring and Autumn period. On the Greek side, "lyric" is a convenient catchall term, for several poetic genres distinguished from one another in ancient Greece by their meters, by whether they were performed with musical accompaniment, and by the instruments used for the musical accompaniment. Like the pieces from the Chinese *Book of Odes*, the Greek lyric poems that will be encountered in the later chapters feature a festive setting, and they offer an excellent lens for observing the ethos of sociability. The prominence of lyric poetry in this study is in keeping with its distinction as the convivial genre par excellence in both ancient Greece and China.

<sup>74</sup> Schmitt-Pantel (1987: 73).

I shall draw on other types of sources insofar as they offer insights into the articulation of values, emotions, and perceptions in various contexts of human interaction in the two ancient societies. These include historical and philosophical writings from both traditions, Greek epic and drama, a Chinese ritual text, and Chinese bronze inscriptions. The inscriptions were cast into ritual bronzes, many of which were food and drink vessels displayed in ancestral temples or buried in tombs or hoards. They record government appointments, military actions, legal affairs, ritual activities, and other events (including feasting) important to the owners of the bronzes. I use the inscriptions for the light that they shed on our understanding of Zhou sociable practice and ideology and to help redress the relative dearth of Chinese texts that can be utilized for this inquiry.<sup>75</sup>

Poetry, drama, history, philosophy, inscriptions, and ritual prescriptions are all marshaled to help reconstruct Chinese and Greek discourses on sociability and gender relations and the institutions behind the patterns of concerns and values in those discourses. This raises the question: what is the relationship between representation and reality in a study that relies on discourses (literary or otherwise) and how can such a study reveal the intricate webs of interpersonal relationships in Chinese and Greek sociable life as men and women lived it?

This question can be answered on two levels. First, even if the poems, stories, prescriptions, prayers, and the records that purport to be about real events do not always enable us to know how men and women actually behaved on sociable occasions in Greece and China, they do tell us how people were supposed to act, how they would like to be known to have acted, what values they associated with their collective activities, and what they thought about the tensions that played out on those occasions. It matters that Chinese and Greek convivialists showed different concerns and judgments about these issues, for consistent patterns in the differences give us an idea of such things as what values were most cherished, what strategies were pursued to realize those values, and

<sup>75</sup> Falkenhausen (2006: 54–55) argues that the bronze inscriptions are ritual texts primarily intended for the ancestors and have limited value as historical records. For the owners of the bronzes, however, information on the manufacture of a vessel and its dedication (e.g., that the king rewarded a person for a service performed on a certain day and that the individual used the reward to have a specific type of vessel cast in honor of a particular ancestor on a particular day) was clearly intended as a record of historical facts. For the student, too, such records impart values and facts that can be explored depending on the student's interest.

what attitudes and solutions people tended to bring to the tensions and conflicts associated with sociable activities in the two societies.

Second, the main texts used in this study not only were firmly rooted in the physical and sociopolitical contexts of their creation and reception but also had tremendous power to shape culture. In the centuries under investigation, both China and Greece were still predominantly oral cultures and various performed genres (including lyric, epic, and drama) served as the media for the dissemination of knowledge and values as well as for entertainment.<sup>76</sup> Sociable events from festivals to drinking parties and sacrificial feasts provided the most important sites for the performances, and many of the literary creations thus derived are “self-reflexive” in their concern with activities, thoughts, and emotions pertaining to occasions of collective pleasure. When the convivialists sang about themselves or when they listened to songs and stories about others, they were participating in a form of socialization in which learning about values and norms was a main component. An educated person was someone who was able to participate in these instructional-sociable processes fully and productively, both as a subscriber to the values articulated in the songs and stories and as a contributor to their transmission by reinterpreting the material in new performances. Granted that what one heard at a banquet or festival was mere “representation” in the sense of being the product of the imagination and not a faithful reflection of ideas and practices associated with an actual individual or group, yet for many centuries such “works of fabrication” molded the value systems and aesthetic sensibilities of the ancient Chinese and Greeks. Representation and reality were supposed to cross into each other’s territory in a world where what we call “literature” was predominantly for public consumption and was entrusted with the making of good men and women.<sup>77</sup>

In short, my study deals with how social institutions are articulated by and productive of discourses. It also assumes that discourse is not secondary to a “reality” that is out there above the corruption of representation; instead, it presupposes that discourse participates in the formation of reality and in how it is experienced. My approach is to situate the representations within the institutional contexts that they

<sup>76</sup> Among many others, see Beecroft (2010), Collins (2004), Gentili (1988), Havelock (1963), Kern (2000, 2005), Kurke (2000), Nagy (1990, 1996), Nylan (2001, ch. 2), Schaberg (1999b), Stehle (1997), and C. H. Wang (1974).

<sup>77</sup> This point is commonly made in studies of education, literature, and literary theory in ancient Greece (see, e.g., Anderson 1966; Pelling 2000; Taplin 2000; and Too 2001).

derived from and in turn shaped, and to compare how differences in institutional contexts related to representational differences in China and Greece. For all their incompleteness and biases, if we treat ancient Chinese and Greek discourses on interpersonal and gender relations not as autonomous systems of signs but always as accounts produced, circulated, and consumed within important social and sociable contexts, they can tell us a good deal about the differences among the concerns, values, and institutional environments of the men and women who were the creators and consumers of the discourses.

That said, it remains true that the sources provide access only to a mediated reality (or realities) and that there will forever be a gap between representation and reality. The songs, plays, prescriptions, and even historical records present all sorts of biases and distortions that must be handled carefully in the attempt to penetrate the filter of representation. Thus the customary caveats about chronological, geographical, and class biases. The first two have been treated at length earlier, and here I shall partly reiterate two points made before. First, the availability of evidence and the principle of economy will inevitably constrain the way I present a certain period or place in the following chapters. However, even if a part of the ensuing discussion exhibits greater reliance on sources pertaining to certain times and places, the aggregate evidence will show that the two broadly distinct and largely consistent patterns observed for China and Greece can be discerned from sources of diverse chronological and geographical provenances. Second, my concern for cross-cultural generalizations may result in a relative neglect of internal variations, which is an inherent limit of a comparative project of this scale. I hope that I can somewhat make up for the loss of historical and geographical complexity with the complexity of the patterns of relations that I present. I also hope that my comparative approach can generate new insights and questions that will contribute to specialists' efforts to deepen our understanding of the two ancient societies.

It is obvious that the protagonists in this study belonged largely to the elite and relatively well-to-do since it required both economic prosperity and social and cultural capital for convivial experiences to be enriched, elevated, and preserved for posterity. On the other hand, the festivals and other public events introduce us to the less privileged convivial crowds. Admittedly, we do not hear about their experiences and thoughts in their own voices but only through the words of the poets, philosophers, and statesmen who brought their own social visions to

bear on their portrayals of the public festivities. In the end, if we are denied direct insight into the emotions and thoughts of the ordinary merry-makers in Greece and China, we nevertheless find instructive contrasts between Chinese and Greek ideologies about the role that public festivities played in the structure and functioning of the sociopolitical order. These contrasts also underlie the striking differences between the representations of gender relations in the two traditions.

If the biases associated with chronological, geographical, and class disparities haunt every student of ancient Greece and China, the virtually complete domination by men of the authorship of the sources poses a particularly serious problem for an investigation that focuses on gender relations. How did women experience the relationships that we now understand mainly through male representations? If we acknowledge that male representations are marred by male prejudices, what meaning do the representations have for us other than as products of male imagination from two ancient societies?

These questions will be addressed by the introduction of a female perspective in the last chapter of this study. Through an examination of poetry by or believed to be by Chinese and Greek women, I will attempt to discover where the male and female views about interpersonal relationships fit or do not fit with each other, as well as what the degree to which male and female points of view agree or clash with each other in the two traditions tells us about the structures and values of these two male-dominant societies. Understanding how male and female viewpoints correlate with each other in the two traditions will help illuminate the multifarious implications of male domination. It also sheds light on an important question that has often proven divisive in women's studies: to what extent do women of different times and places share characteristics and interests just by virtue of their gender, and to what extent are their mentalities and behaviors shaped by the different ideas and institutions of the societies in which they live?

Finally, a few words must be said about some problems that are specific to a comparative study like the present one. First, the disparity in the genres of the sources being compared may lead to a skewed picture of the two societies, and the fact that some genres were only attested in one of the two traditions (most notably, epic and drama in Greece and ritual compendia in China) poses challenges to attempts to use those genres in the comparison. Second, the danger exists of making too much of a certain author, a certain text, or certain portions of a text (many of the sources being fragments), without adequately considering

how representative they are for their own tradition and hence how much weight should be assigned to them in the comparison.

In encountering these problems, I would like to say initially that I believe that the existence or lack of a genre in a tradition can be very telling in itself. For instance, the rich store of ritual teachings in China may point to the crucial importance of maintaining a hierarchy-based order in that society, in contrast to the Greeks' emphasis on competitive public festivities, including contests in song and drama, in pursuit of solidarity and harmony. This belief aside, I have observed three inter-related principles in my choice and interpretation of sources.

First, sources of different genres may be compared if they have similar contexts of creation and reception, serve analogous functions, or enjoy comparable status in the social life and literary history of the two traditions. Second, the comparison must not give rise to facile value judgments about whether the Chinese or the Greeks were "better" in the way they handled interpersonal and gender relations. For instance, with this in mind I have largely stayed away from Greek tragedy, because the often grim view of humanity of the plays can easily be misunderstood in the absence of fully contextualized analyses (which cannot be done in the present inquiry). The limited references to Greek tragedies in this study generally concern Greek social practices and values that are abundantly corroborated by other sources. While it is impossible to achieve complete generic parity in the comparison, I hope that overall I have presented a balanced picture of ancient China and Greece, complete with their norms and ideals as well as their problems and concerns. Finally, the significance of a certain text or of its fragments has to be determined by viewing the material within the broader tradition and by looking for a common denominator with other sources in the same tradition. This is intended to preclude suspicion that its use represents merely the views of an author (or authors) with an idiosyncratic temperament or a particular sociopolitical agenda. Therefore, when I use Chinese ritual texts, for example, I pay no attention to their meticulous details and corroborate their prescriptions by referring to historical records, bronze inscriptions, and poems that testify to the essence of those rules. Also, when I use Greek lyric poems, many of which are preserved only in fragments, I situate the fragments in the context of other texts, complete and incomplete, to see what conclusions may be drawn.

In the tricky task of selecting sources for comparison, the challenge is to piece together from material representing different genres, authors, times, and places a plausible picture of the complex alignments of

interpersonal relationships across social spheres and gender lines in the two classical traditions under study. My way of arriving at this picture does not exclude competing approaches to understanding the patterns of gender and sociability in the two ancient traditions. Nor does it suggest that a seamless picture can ever emerge. In the face of the vexing relationship between representation and reality, I have to hope that, with the benefit of abundant caveats and precautions, I can present the convivial men and women in ancient Greece and China in a way that does justice to the rich sources in each tradition by illuminating what the disparate sources have in common and why that is important, both for the ancients themselves and for the comparatists many centuries later.

### Chapter Outline

This book falls into three parts, with Part 1 devoted to an examination of the sociable relationships among men, Part 2 to the interaction among women and between men and women in various sociable contexts, and Part 3 to a search for a female perspective and an analysis of the relationship between female experience and male imagination.

The two chapters in Part 1 ("Among Men"), entitled "Greece: Comrades, Citizens, and Boys" and "China: Ancestors, Brothers, and Sons," examine Greek and Chinese discourses on male sociability and set the stage for the examination of gender relations in later parts. Whereas Chapter 1 is entirely devoted to the Greeks, Chapter 2 presents the Chinese convivialists and, along the way, draws comparisons with the Greeks. Each chapter features three categories of protagonists: "comrades, citizens, and boys" for Greece and "ancestors, brothers, and sons" for China. The first category in each set, comrades and ancestors, anchors the fundamental conception of ideal male sociability in each tradition. Fellow citizens and beloved boys in pederastic relations are essentially comrades and comrades in the making, whereas brothers and sons join *ego* in a hierarchically organized corporate group under the auspices of the ancestors. In contrast to the foregrounding of public contexts and agonistic extrafamilial homosocial relationships in the Greek tradition, the Chinese upheld the patrilineal family as the central site for cultural reproduction and the celebration of human relatedness.

There are two chapters in Part 2 ("Between Men and Women, Among Women"). Chapter 3, entitled "Public Festivals and Domestic Rites,"



discusses Chinese and Greek representations of gender relations in light of the two distinct religious structures, shown in Part 1 to underlie the different forms and ideals of male sociability found in China and Greece. Extensive sources depict Greek women as excelling in musical contests and flourishing among their companions in public religious activities. By contrast, ancestor worship, performed in the ancestral temple for patrilineal ancestors, defined the roles of Chinese women in the family and in society. The Greek celebration of extrafamilial female homosocial bonding in public festive contexts is completely absent in the Chinese sources.

Chapter 4, entitled “At the Table and Behind the Scenes,” zeroes in on the domestic dynamics of gender relations by analyzing women’s involvement in two kinds of convivial activities: women attended banquets for family members, and women also planned the festivities and witnessed from behind the scenes when their kinsmen entertained guests at home. This chapter examines how men and women interacting at the table are shown, and how men perceived their kinswomen’s behind-the-scenes roles. Whereas sexual rivalry is a key theme in the Greek sources, generational hierarchy that cuts across the gender line is a major preoccupation in the Chinese representations of domestic festivities.

Part 3 (“Female Experience and Male Imagination”), which consists of the single chapter “What Women Sang Of,” is an attempt to address the question of how women viewed and experienced the gender relations that we have so far understood only through male representations. I do so by examining poetry composed by or believed to be composed by Chinese and Greek women. Sentiments revolving around male-centered family and kinship ties defined women’s voices in Chinese poetry. In contrast, Greek women maintained silence about husbands and in-laws but sang warmly of female friendships and the mother–daughter bond (a family relationship that was noticeably marginalized in the Chinese tradition). While these findings confirm what we know about gender relations in Greece and China from male sources, they also demonstrate the different degrees of schism between the values expressed by female authors and speakers and the expectations held by men of their womenfolk in both the Greek and Chinese literary traditions.

In the Conclusion, I offer an analytical summary of the two patterns of gender and sociability, which I interpret in terms of two different dialectics of affinity and conflict. I also point out in what ways my study challenges and enriches previous anthropological and comparative findings.



PART ONE

AMONG MEN



## Greece

*Comrades, Citizens, and Boys*

As Yvon Garlan has noted, the centrality of the warrior was asserted on all levels and in all realms of Greek society, from artistic representations of domestic life to the attributes of the Olympic deities to moral prescriptions on human good.<sup>1</sup> Throughout Greek history, the image of a courageous fighter and loyal comrade was an ideal to which a Greek man was expected to aspire.

In this chapter I examine various aspects of this image as it appears in Greek literary representations of festivities. Military banquets were by no means the only or even the major places where both high competitiveness and strong extrafamilial homosocial bonds were nourished among the champions and citizen-soldiers of Greece. Nor were such bonds restricted to coeval adults. There was great continuity between a military *agon* (contest) and the *agon* in the athletic and musical competitions at the numerous public festivals,<sup>2</sup> and the famous Greek pederastic love in its normative, educational function was governed by the same rhetoric of comradeship and *agon*. At parties and in the gymnasia, the older lover strove to prove himself the worthiest mentor and companion by transmitting his prowess, competitiveness, and social and political wisdom to the boy beloved and by helping the youth grow into a qualified citizen-soldier. The warrior ethos, with its dual valorization of camaraderie and rivalry, fully informed Greek sociability and accounted for the prominence of the comrades, citizens, and boys in Greek literary sources on male convivial life.

This analysis begins with Homer and continues with the poetry of Alkaios (b. ca. 620 BCE), an aristocrat who was a native of Lesbos and

<sup>1</sup> Garlan (1995: 54).

<sup>2</sup> Cartledge (1985: 112) remarks that competition at the Olympics was a "paramilitary exercise."

enjoyed fame in antiquity for his drinking songs. The symposium offers the master context for the next work to be examined, the *Theognidea*, which is a collection of about fourteen hundred verses accrued under the name of Theognis of Megara (fl. mid-sixth century BCE) and filled with teachings of wisdom cherished by contemporary and later Greeks alike. After that, the *Attic Skolia*, a corpus of popular drinking songs most of which are believed to have been composed in Athens in the late sixth or early fifth century BCE, is analyzed. This will be followed by an examination of two dialogues, one by Plato (ca. 427–347 BCE) and the other by Xenophon (ca. 444–357 BCE) and both entitled *Symposium*, which purport to be reminiscences of a banquet that the two authors' master, Socrates (ca. 469–399 BCE), attended many years earlier. Finally, there will be a discussion of the role of religion in Greek sociability. Besides drawing on most of the previously mentioned texts, this discussion will focus on the celebratory odes that Pindar (ca. 518–438 BCE) and Bakchylides (fl. fifth century BCE) wrote for the victors at athletic festivals. Moving beyond the aristocratic drinking parties, this last section introduces religion as an all-pervasive element in Greek sociable practices and broadens the context for the comparative inquiry. As I will argue in Chapters 2 and 3, the different rationales, forms, and spaces of Greek and Chinese religious festivities provide an excellent vantage point from which to understand the significant differences between the institutions and discourses of sociability in the two societies.

### Homer

This inquiry starts with the funeral games in Book 23 of the *Iliad*, Homer's epic about the tenth and final year of the Trojan War.<sup>3</sup> Achilles, the Greek hero of the epic, holds the games for Patroklos, his dearest comrade-in-arms, who has fallen in battle against Hektor the primary Trojan defender.<sup>4</sup> In the five books prior to this episode (Books 18–22), the bard offered haunting descriptions of Achilles' consuming grief over his companion's death. Refusing food and drink as he mourns,

<sup>3</sup> The traditional date for the Trojan War is set in the twelfth century BCE. The *Iliad* (as does the *Odyssey*) contains an amalgamation of elements (language, objects, practices, beliefs) from different periods, but most modern scholars accept that it was written down in the eighth century BCE.

<sup>4</sup> Patroklos is referred to as Achilles' "dearest comrade-in-arms" at *Il.* 17.411 and 17.655 (*philtatos hetairos*); at *Il.* 18.80–82 Achilles remembers Patroklos as his "dear comrade" (*philos hetairos*), "the man I loved beyond all other comrades, / loved as my own life" (*ton egō peri pantōn tion hetairōn / ison emēi kephalēi*).

Achilles thinks of the prophecy that he himself will die as soon as he avenges Patroklos' death and bursts into a heart-wrenching lament for his dear friend:

The heart within me fasts from food and drink  
though stores inside are full – I'm sick with longing for you!  
There is no more shattering blow that I could suffer.  
Not even if I should learn of my own father's death  
who, this moment, is weeping warm tears in Phthia,  
I know it, bereft of a son as loved as this.<sup>5</sup>

The funeral games that follow on Achilles' killing of Hektor, therefore, highlight the agonistic spirit and the premium placed on comradeship in the world of the Homeric warriors. After a funeral feast and the burning of the pyre, Achilles proceeds to honor his fallen comrade with games for the entire army. Two-thirds of Book 23 is devoted to an itemized description of the competitions in chariot racing, boxing, wrestling, footracing, dueling, archery, discus throwing, and spear throwing. The competing warriors, all of them the best among the Greeks, physically exert themselves to the fullest and taunt each other as they engage in this intense fight for peer recognition. These games at once pay tribute to the prowess, nobility, and loyalty of Achilles' closest companion and to the institutionalized activities that nourish the kind of men who embody those qualities, the warrior group.<sup>6</sup>

Odysseus, the king of Ithaka and a major warlord in the Greek alliance against Troy, is the winner in two events – wrestling and the footrace – at Patroklos' funeral games.<sup>7</sup> The tribulations of his postwar homecoming are the subject of Homer's other epic, the *Odyssey*. Whereas the *Iliad* plays out around the battlefield and the relationships among the warriors, the *Odyssey* represents a reassertion of family bonds and domestic values. Wandering across lands and seas for ten years after Troy, Odysseus finally reaches Ithaka, only to be faced with the 108 noblemen who are vying for the hand of his wife Penelope and gather daily for revels in his

<sup>5</sup> *Il.* 19.321–324; Fagles 499. “autar emon kêr / akmēnon posios kai edētuos, endon contōn, / sēi pothēi. ou men gar ti kakōteron allo pathoimi / oud' ei ken tou patros apophthimenoio puthoimēn, / hos pou nun Phthiēphi teren kata dakruon eibēi / chētei toioud' huios.”

<sup>6</sup> B. Brown (2003: 123) analyzes the funeral games for Patroklos in terms of how “a society of peers circulates honor and preserves a principle of equality.” Both B. Brown (2003) and Golden (1998: 93–94) point out that games held toward the end of the epic signal a resolution of bloody confrontation and a transition to peace.

<sup>7</sup> *Il.* 23.700–797 offers an extended description of the two events.

palace. By the end of the epic, Odysseus has slain the suitors and won back his kingship, his property, and his wife, thanks to the assistance of his son Telemakhos and of a few loyal servants.<sup>8</sup> David Konstan has a good point in saying that the *Odyssey* “emphasizes the integrity and autonomy of the individual homestead” and that “friendship is marginal to the narrative.”<sup>9</sup> However, it is doubtful whether Odysseus can be considered, as Charles Boer calls him, a “hero of family.”<sup>10</sup> In depicting the numerous convivial scenes in the *Odyssey*, Homer constantly reminds us that Odysseus is a war hero and even throws out tantalizing hints that his hero’s true self belongs to a world of comrades bonded by friendship and engaged in never-ending adventures.

In Book 8, the drifting Odysseus arrives at the island of the hospitable Phaiakians and is treated to a rich feast by King Alkinoos. Judging that his guests have had enough of food, drink, and music, Alkinoos orders that games be conducted. The young Phaiakian nobles engage in contests in footrace, wrestling, jumping, and discus. The bard’s depiction of the footrace alone conveys the fierceness and excitement of the rivalry:

The field strung out from the starting scratch, yet all at the same time  
flew on together, turning up the dust of the plain. Of these  
stately Klytoneos was far the best in the running,  
and was out in front by the length of a furrow for mules plowing  
a field, and came back first to the crowd, with the rest behind him.

(*Od.* 8.121–125; Lattimore 124)

Odysseus is drawn into the competition when one of the Phaiakian noblemen, all of whom have by now been stirred and delighted by the games, challenges their guest:

Come you also now, father stranger, and try these contests,  
if you have skill in any. It beseems you to know athletics,

<sup>8</sup> Winkler (1990a: 129–161) argues that Homer invites his audience to suspect that Penelope also plays a role in Odysseus’ successful return.

<sup>9</sup> Konstan (1997: 26–27).

<sup>10</sup> Commenting on the contrast in themes between the two Homeric epics, Charles Boer remarks, “Achilles is the hero of friendship, his supreme value in life no matter what. Odysseus is the hero of family, his supreme value. Accordingly, Odysseus has no friends. Achilles thinks (briefly in Book Nine) about family, but gives it up for what he sees as a far nobler cause” (foreword to the 1992 edition of W. B. Stanford’s *The Ulysses Theme*, p. vii). Pucci (1987: 214–227; 1998: 1–9) explores the *Odyssey*’s “polemical” relationship with the *Iliad*. On the explicit or implicit tendency in criticism to correlate the *Odyssey* with “feminine” qualities in contrast to the *Iliad*’s masculine and heroic character, see Clayton (2004, ch. 1).



for there is no greater glory that can befall a man living  
than what he achieves by speed of his feet or strength of his hands.

(*Od.* 8.145–148; Lattimore 125)

When Odysseus declines on the claim that he is too consumed with longing for home to participate in sports, he receives a taunt that is too insulting for the hero of the Trojan War to bear.<sup>11</sup> After shooting back contemptuous remarks to his young challenger, Odysseus declares that he is now in the competition despite the hardships he has suffered during his years of war and wandering (*Od.* 8.182–185). With a quick and easy win in discus throwing, the vindicated champion in turn challenges the young men to match his mark and announces his willingness to engage in any other contest because he is confident that he will win:

I am not bad in any of the contests where men strive.  
I know well how to handle the polished bow, and would be  
first to strike any man with an arrow aimed at a company  
of hostile men, even though many companions were standing  
close beside me, and all shooting with bows at the enemies.  
There was Philoktetes alone who surpassed me in archery  
when we Achaians shot with bows in the Trojan country.  
But I will say that I stand far out ahead of all others  
such as are living mortals now and feed on the earth.

(*Od.* 8.214–222; Lattimore 126–127)

Invoking his Trojan War experience to flaunt his excellence in sports, Odysseus makes it clear in the preceding speech that he regards athletics as an extension of warfare. Here he may well be supplying an additional answer to his young challenger's earlier claim that men's greatest fame comes from their demonstration of speed and strength. By both affirming that claim and speaking of his own athletic skills in terms of military feats, Odysseus upholds military prowess as the more prestigious accomplishment.<sup>12</sup> What is more, he demonstrates that although he has appeared on the island as a lonely and homesick wanderer, his identity as a warrior cannot be doubted. It is combat in the company of his comrades that ultimately proves his worth.

<sup>11</sup> *Od.* 8.161–164; Lattimore 125. Reflecting the typical Greek aristocratic mentality, the young man compares Odysseus to a merchant who has no skills in sports. See Stanford's (1959: 336) commentary on *Od.* 8.161–164.

<sup>12</sup> As Stanford (1959: 335) points out, the young man's claim applies "in time of peace."

Reading about this episode, we must recall the funeral games for Patroklos in the *Iliad*, which exemplify the kind of environment from which the Odyssean hero comes. The courteous guest at King Alkinoos' banquet and the provoked competitor at the games with the Phaiakian noblemen is the same great warrior who participated in Patroklos' funeral feast, won two championships, and earned the admiration of his much younger Phaiakian rival.<sup>13</sup>

Thanks to an escort of Phaiakians, who boast of having incomparable seafaring skills, Odysseus arrives in Ithaka by a swift ship. The next eleven books of the *Odyssey* (Books 14–24) recount Odysseus' appearance at his own palace disguised as a beggar. He mingles with the merry-making suitors before killing them and reclaiming all that had been usurped. The slaughter of the suitors takes place during their regular reveling in the banquet hall of Odysseus' palace, and what may be called the climactic festive scene of the epic bears out the intimate connection between conviviality and physical competitiveness in the *Odyssey*.

The moment of doom for the suitors is heralded by an archery contest that Penelope organizes to determine who will be her new husband. All of the suitors have failed to string the mighty bow left by Odysseus. Now, the king himself, still in the guise of a beggar who has received a place at the banquet table thanks to Telemakhos' generosity, requests and receives permission to try his hand. He succeeds, easily emerging as the mightiest of the assembled men. Odysseus declares himself to be the champion and an avenger under the aegis of Apollo, the archer god. The image of Odysseus, standing at the hall's threshold and aiming his arrows at the banqueters, evokes the archer god himself, one of Apollo's epithets being "he who works from afar."<sup>14</sup> When the slaughter

<sup>13</sup> After Odysseus has won the footrace, Antilokhos, who took the last prize, expresses admiration for Odysseus as "a man of an earlier generation" who nevertheless remains hard to beat (*Il.* 23.790). Obviously, Odysseus has enjoyed a long, green old age and remains invincible even ten years later.

<sup>14</sup> Later, in a striking image of the hunt, Homer describes the advantage that Odysseus and his helpers (Telemakhos, several faithful servants, and Athena in the guise of an old family friend) have over the suitors, who put up a futile defense: "the other men [Odysseus' band], who were like hook-clawed, beak-bent vultures, / descending from the mountains to pounce upon the lesser birds; / and these on the plain, shrinking away from the clouds, speed off, / but the vultures plunge on them and destroy them, nor is there any / defense, nor any escape, and men are glad for the hunting; / so these men, sweeping about the palace, struck down / the suitors, one man after another; the floor was smoking / with blood, and the horrible cries rose up as their heads were broken" (*Od.* 22.302–309; Lattimore 329). In Greek literature and art, hunting was often analogized to battle; both were areas for the display of heroic values (Barringer 2001). Significantly, the first feat of Odysseus that the epic relates

is over, Odysseus stands amid the piles of bodies scattered across the banquet hall, his feet and hands stained with blood. It is as an invincible warrior that Odysseus finally reveals himself in his own banquet hall. The fact that Athena, the goddess of war, allies herself with him in the battle highlights this ultimate identity for the Trojan War hero who has returned home.<sup>15</sup> Unlike the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* is an epic about the return to civil and domestic life, but that return is announced through a bloody battle in the very place that should symbolize the delights and harmony of a life of peace.<sup>16</sup> Since the destruction of the suitors occurs near the end of the story, we feel that the Homeric bard and his audience were eager to see their hero engaging in one more military feat before letting him return to a family life that will lack the excitement of war, as well as interest as a literary theme.

In fact, in Book 14, Odysseus himself hints at the meaning of domesticity for him and the role of convivial practice in his life as king and warrior. This occurs just after Odysseus has landed in Ithaka incognito. He is entertained by Eumaios, his former swineherd, and he makes up a story about his own identity. In that fabricated account, Odysseus presents himself as a Cretan nobleman and honored warrior who has no fondness for labor in the field or care for his house, “though that is what raises glorious children.” Instead, he has always held dear “ships that are driven on by oars,” as well as “the wars, and throwing spears with polished hafts, and the arrows, / gloomy things, which to other men are terrible” (*Od.* 14.222–226; Lattimore 216). After leading his comrades to fight in the Trojan War, he stays home for only a month “[to delight] in my children, lawful wife, and riches” before leaving again. “My spirit urged me on / to sail to Egypt with my godlike friends / as soon as

takes place during the hunt, when, while still an adolescent, he showed remarkable strength and poise in killing a wild boar (*Od.* 19.428–466).

<sup>15</sup> Athena is also a goddess of wisdom (especially, of so-called cunning intelligence; see Detienne and Vernant 1978). She favors Odysseus above all mortal men because he shares that attribute with her (Stanford 1992, ch. 3). Appearing at Odysseus’ side in numerous situations in both Homeric epics, Athena stirs and aids a warrior of great intelligence, that is, someone like herself.

<sup>16</sup> While being entertained by the Phaiakians, Odysseus remarks that he finds nothing on this earth more beautiful than a delightful feast. “I think there is no occasion accomplished that is more pleasant / than when festivity holds sway among all the populace, / and the feasters up and down the houses are sitting in order / and listening to the singer, and beside them the tables are loaded / with bread and meats, and from the mixing bowl the wine steward / draws the wine and carries it about and fills the cups. This / seems to my own mind to be the best of occasions” (*Od.* 9.5–11; Lattimore 137).

I could fit out ships with care,"<sup>17</sup> as he relates. What he leaves home for this time is his old profession, which seems to have been piracy but which he presents as military undertakings that are the equivalent of the Trojan War.<sup>18</sup>

The fictitious Cretan nobleman prides himself on his enjoyment of and expertise in warfare. Family life clearly cannot hold his interest because it lacks excitement; he seems to come alive only in the company of his comrades and in their joint search for adventure. I do not believe that Odysseus creates his Cretan alter ego purely for the purpose of concealing his identity from his former servant. Perhaps, lending validity to the belief that it is easier to reveal one's true self to strangers, here, before making his final moves to reclaim his usurped kingship and home, Odysseus lightheartedly – and over wine<sup>19</sup> – reveals where his passions and aspirations lie. In the fictitious account that he imparts to his servant, Odysseus thus tells of the feast that he threw for his men before they set sail for Egypt:

I appointed nine ships, and rapidly the people were gathered,  
and for six days then my eager companions continued  
feasting, but I provided them with abundant victims  
for sacrifice to the gods, and for themselves to make ready  
their feast. On the seventh day we went aboard and from wide Crete  
sailed on a North Wind that was favorable and fair.

(*Od.* 14.248–253; Lattimore 216)

During Odysseus' reign in Ithaka before the Trojan War, the great halls of his palace witnessed many rich banquets like the one that the fictitious Cretan nobleman gives his comrades.<sup>20</sup> Presumably, these festivities will return to Ithaka with Odysseus' reinstatement following the annihilation of the suitors. The killings in the banquet hall that accompany Odysseus' triumphant homecoming pronounce the restoration of a warlord's leadership and begin the reconsolidation of a warrior group that will be sustained by commensality.<sup>21</sup> The honored leader and

<sup>17</sup> The entire account: *Od.* 14.199ff. The quoted lines: *Od.* 14.244–247; Lattimore 216. "Godlike companions": *antitheois hetaroisin*.

<sup>18</sup> Before the Trojan War, Odysseus led his men on expeditions to foreign lands nine times (*Od.* 14.230f). On piracy in the Homeric world, see Tandy (1997: 74).

<sup>19</sup> This conversation with Eumaios takes place after the two have finished dinner and just as they start drinking (*Od.* 14.109ff.).

<sup>20</sup> In *Od.* 19. 314–316, Penelope remembers her missing husband as the most hospitable host.

<sup>21</sup> "The suitors' crime," as Murray (1995: 222) puts it, "in fact lies in their usurping the prerogatives of a warrior class in the absence of the warlord."

hospitable host are the same person as the exalted warrior. The latter, however, is Odysseus' essential identity, and he proves it by demonstrating his valor and skill with arrows and spears in a place where the Cretan nobleman's "gloomy things" should find no use. The Homeric story of Odysseus' homecoming is hardly about the peace and stability of home; as Michael Nagler puts it, "Odysseus comes home from the war, but he brings war with him."<sup>22</sup> As it is for the Cretan nobleman, home is where a warrior like Odysseus replenishes himself before setting out again. He must visit many cities, Odysseus later reveals to Penelope, in fulfillment of a prophecy, and only after those journeys will he be able to grow old among his own people (*Od.* 23.267–284).<sup>23</sup>

Despite its settings far away from the battlefield and its concern with domesticity, the *Odyssey* does not represent a real break from the *Iliad* but can instead be said to deal with the other side of the life of an aristocratic warrior. The Odyssean hero comes from a world where a desire for victory and fame motivates combatants and where love and conflict among comrades dominate the emotions. The funeral games that Achilles holds in honor of Patroklos not only testify to warrior solidarity and peer rivalry in a gruesome military setting but also loom large in Odysseus' triumphant participation in the convivial delights of Phaiakia and Ithaka. It may be telling that, despite the numerous banquets described in the *Odyssey* and despite Odysseus' repeatedly expressed longing during his wanderings for sweet family life, no festive celebration marks his homecoming, the epic's purported theme.<sup>24</sup> Only two

<sup>22</sup> Nagler (1993: 257).

<sup>23</sup> In the *Telegony*, dated to the sixth century BCE and the latest among the post-Homeric poems in the so-called Epic Cycle, Odysseus leaves Ithaka again after the slaying of the suitors and embarks on further adventures (Davies 1989: 84–91). Stanford (1992: 86–89), who points out that the *Telegony* plot opens the door to later traditions of Odysseus the wanderer down to Dante and Tennyson, argues that the later developments represent a fundamentally different outlook from Homer's *Odyssey*, whose hero's "heart and mind is essentially homeward bound." However, as Stanford (1992: 87–88) acknowledges, Homer does drop hints (including the prophecy that I refer to here) that offer fertile ground for later imaginative descriptions of Odysseus' subsequent journeys. In this sense, the later developments probably represent the natural fulfillment of the character of Homer's Odysseus. As Stanford (1992: 88) also points out, instead of being the invention of a sixth-century BCE poet, the *Telegony* might have been based on pre-Homeric tradition.

<sup>24</sup> After slaying the suitors, Odysseus orders that the following arrangement be made: "Tell the women in the palace to choose out their clothing. / Then let the inspired singer take his clear-sounding lyre, / and give us the lead for festive dance, so that anyone / who is outside, some one of the neighbors, or a person going / along the street, who hears us, will think we are having a wedding" (*Od.* 23.132–136; Lattimore 338). Intended to conceal the news of the suitors' demise from their relatives and thus

former Trojan War champions participate in domestic festivities in the *Odyssey*. One is Nestor, the oldest of the Greek chieftains to have joined the Trojan War, and the other is Melenaos, the henpecked husband of Helen, whose abduction by the Trojan prince Paris brought about the Trojan War.<sup>25</sup> For Odysseus, who remains a hero of action after surviving the war, narratives of feasting still demonstrate prowess and leadership and invoke memories of camaraderie. As James Redfield observes, “from Homer onward, the Greek political community is conceived as a self-governing band of warriors.”<sup>26</sup> The intense competitiveness and the high value placed on extrafamilial homosocial bonding that we have seen in Homeric feasting continue to distinguish later Greek discourses on sociability.

### Alkaios

The poetry of Alkaios offers glimpses into the activities and sentiments of a seventh-century BCE aristocratic warrior whose world seems to have been dominated by partisan politics. In characteristically intense language, Alkaios either abuses and accuses his rivals and erstwhile allies or sings of the political and military exploits of himself and his comrades. On either topic, collective wine drinking provides the most consistent context for his poetic expression. The antiquarian Athenaios (ca. 170–ca. 230) marveled over Alkaios’ ability to find a pretext for drinking under any circumstances (*Deipnosophists* 10.430b). Whether that was true of the historical aristocrat in Lesbos of the seventh century BCE is beside the point because we are concerned only with the poetic persona emerging from the Alkaian corpus that gives eloquent expression to the Greek convivial experience.<sup>27</sup> Fragment 140 by Alkaios reads:

give Odysseus more time to prepare for future battles (which take place in Book 24), this make-believe feast cannot be taken as a bona fide celebration of family life.

<sup>25</sup> Nestor: *Od.* 3; Melenaos: *Od.* 4. We touch on the festivities at Nestor’s palace later in this chapter and again in Chapter 3, and the convivial presence of Melenaos and Helen will be discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>26</sup> Redfield (1995: 165).

<sup>27</sup> Athenaios, like most readers, both ancient and modern, identifies the speaker in Alkaios’ poems with the historical aristocrat and poet himself. Such an identification has the familiar problem of circularity, that is, we obtain an image of the real man from the poetry attributed to him and then read those pieces for confirmation of the image thus constructed (Lefkowitz 1981). This problem is not that pertinent for my purposes. What interests me are the remarkably coherent themes, images, and sentiments in the Alkaian corpus. Whether they belonged to the historical Alkaios or to a wider community of aristocratic warriors like him, for convenience I call the poetic speaker Alkaios. Nagy (1996: 217), who accepts the symposium as the context

... and the great hall gleams with bronze:  
 the whole ceiling is dressed for the war-god  
 with bright helmets, down from which  
 nod white horse-hair plumes,  
 adornments for men's heads.  
 Bright bronze greaves  
 hide the pegs they hang on,  
 defense against a strong arrow;  
 there are corselets of new linen  
 and hollow shields thrown on the floor.  
 Beside them are swords from Chalcis  
 and many belts and tunics.  
 These we have been unable to forget,  
 ever since we first undertook this task.

Athenaios used fragment 140 to illustrate Alkaios' ultra-warlike spirit.<sup>28</sup> The elaborate description of the arms on the wall reminds us of the military paraphernalia in Odysseus' banquet hall.<sup>29</sup> However, there is an important difference between the broader historical circumstances of the two convivial contexts. Whereas the maintenance and self-expression of a competitive aristocratic military elite were unambiguously celebrated in the Homeric world through commensal practices, the adoption of the tactics of the hoplites (heavily armed foot soldiers) and the resultant dramatic increase in the militarily effective population in the seventh century BCE made loyalty to a cooperative community of citizen-soldiers the new virtue that informed the Archaic convivial discourse.<sup>30</sup>

for the performance and reperformance of Alkaios' poetry, emphasizes the adaptability of the Alkaiian persona through time and in a wide variety of situations. As he puts it, "Yes, there may have been a real-life Alkaios, and his real-life circumstances may indeed be a starting point that generates a distinctive Alkaiian tradition. But with each occasion in which Alkaios becomes reenacted in performance for his *hetaireia* [group of companions, association, club] at a symposium, he is moved one occasion farther away from the ostensibly prototypical occasion" (Nagy 2004: 31–32).

<sup>28</sup> A few words from lines 1–10 have survived. Athenaios' comment appears in *Deipnosophists* 14.627a.

<sup>29</sup> In Book 1 of the *Odyssey*, when the suitors are for the first time shown feasting in Odysseus' palace, Homer calls attention to the weapons in the banquet hall, as Telemakhos invites a traveling stranger (Athena in disguise) to the banquet and places her lance "against a tall column / in a rack for spears, of polished wood, where indeed there were other / spears of patient-hearted Odysseus standing in numbers" (*Od.* 1.127–129; Lattimore 30).

<sup>30</sup> Adkins (1960) advocates the now widely accepted view that Homeric society was dominated by competitive virtues and that the history of Greek moral thought was characterized by a gradual transition from competitive to cooperative virtues. The theory that posits a causal link between military developments and ethical and political transformations in the Archaic period has a wide following (e.g., Adkins 1960;

Alkaios' predominant concern with factional strife and cliquish bonding may well be at odds with the ethos of the military elegies by such authors as Tyrtaios, Kallinos, and Mimnermos if we follow the view that all songs of martial exhortation in the Archaic age were intended for sympotic performance.<sup>31</sup> What did not change from Homer to the seventh century BCE, however, and what is common to all our convivialist-singers in the hoplite age, are the central elements of competitive heroism and peer solidarity. This holds true even as the peer group, the "community" that matters, changed from the aristocracy to the entire citizenry.<sup>32</sup> In other words, the transition from competitive to cooperative virtues in the Greek value system that Arthur Adkins has famously expounded is not about the rejection of competitive excellences but about the advocacy of cooperative rivalry and its application to more areas of activities by a greatly widened base of the citizen population.<sup>33</sup>

Myrsilos and Pittakos (ca. 650–570 BCE), who seem to have shared power in Mytilene, the largest city in Alkaios' native Lesbos, were among the major enemies against whom Alkaios and his party engaged in factional strife. The fight against them may well be the "task" mentioned in the last line of fragment 140, and the poem may have been performed at a gathering where the group renewed their vow to carry on the struggle.

Murray 1980, ch. 8; and Vernant 1980, ch. 2), but see the questioning of the thesis in Krentz (2007) and Morris (1987: 196–205). Murray (1991: 94–98) argues that the ideological change is reflected in the difference in sympotic ethics from Homer to the seventh-century BCE elegists.

<sup>31</sup> Bowie (1986, 1990) has repeatedly made this argument, which is followed by Murray (1991: 94–98) when he notes the difference between the concerns of Alkaios and of the seventh-century BCE military elegists.

<sup>32</sup> Rösler (1990: 234), for example, takes the group to which Alkaios addressed his poetry as the poet's "community." Though the undifferentiated use of such terms as "the public" and "the community" to describe the context for the creation and reception of Archaic Greek poetry (a common practice in contemporary classical scholarship) masks some important differences in historical circumstances, distinctions duly made (which public? what kind of community? etc.) do not affect my study's overall argument regarding ancient Greece or its comparison with ancient China.

<sup>33</sup> Adkins (1960). The theme of cooperative rivalry will recur in this chapter, especially in my analysis of the victory odes. The dialectic between cooperation and competition, and between harmony and conflict, in Greek mythological, political, and philosophical thinking is illustrated by Loraux's (2002, ch. 4) apt phrasing, "the bond of division." In the area of political science (knowledge about the governing of the *polis*, that is), we find in Aristotle a keen recognition of the necessity for diversity and competition among the constituents of the polity (Saxonhouse 1992). If fissure and eternal strife are the necessary price that must be paid for the attainment of the civic harmony that Aristotle envisions for the viable city, they are a consequence that he would find preferable to an order of uniformity that is unbecoming to a community of free equals.



The gleaming weapons hanging from the wall, which the men “have been unable to forget,” testify to their resolve and prowess, and the song itself evidences their ability to celebrate their strong ties. While the “hall” in fragment 140 may or may not refer to a banquet hall, many Alkaian fragments present themselves as songs that come forth when banqueters express hatred toward their enemies, share their frustrations, and offer one another encouragement, as we shall see.<sup>34</sup>

Fragment 335 bears out the frequent use Alkaios and his comrades make of drinking wine, the best means for forgetting setbacks and uplifting spirits. In the fragment, the poet addresses a man named Bykkhis, who may be a particularly close comrade:

We should not surrender our hearts to our troubles,  
for we shall make no headway by grieving,  
Bykkhis: the best of remedies  
is to bring wine and get drunk.

Bykkhis is singled out again in fragment 73, when Alkaios calls on his comrades to put aside thought of their grave situation and enjoy each other’s company for the moment. The personified image of a ship (which may be carrying Alkaios and his company) occupies a central place in the fragment:

the whole cargo ...  
as much as possible (by the surf?)  
she says she has no wish to be struck<sup>35</sup>  
by a ... wave and to fight against the rain  
(and the wild storm?) and (to be broken?)  
battered by a hidden reef.  
Let her in these circumstances (go her way;  
I, my friend, wish) to forget these things  
and to enjoy being young in company with you all,  
and together with Bykkhis to ...  
And so we to the next (day) ...  
if any ...  
showing ...

<sup>34</sup> That Alkaios and his comrades performed together and for one another is argued by Nagy (1996: 83; 2004: 32–33), who draws the following distinction between a “performer” and a “group”: “Whereas a performer performs for an audience, a group can perform together for each other. Group performance is possible even if some members take on far more important roles than others, to the extent that an outsider may not even be able to distinguish a group from an audience.”

<sup>35</sup> Gentili (1988, ch. 11). For similar personifications in Alkaian poetry, see fragments 6 and 208.

The danger the ship is in may be an allegory for the political situation Alkaïos and his party find themselves in. In battles and danger together, winning and losing together, and being young together (line 9) to ease tension briefly and regain vitality for the struggles ahead: such is the close bond between Alkaïos and his comrades as sung of in his poetry. The incomplete state of line 10, which mentions Bykthis, prevents our knowing what the poet wishes to do with Bykthis besides what he hopes for the entire group ("in company with you all," line 9), but there can be little doubt that Bykthis is a special companion.<sup>36</sup>

Another comrade who is addressed in Alkaïos' poems is Melanippos. According to Herodotus (*Histories*, 5.94–95), Alkaïos once sent a poem (fragment 428) to Melanippos, his comrade (*hetairos*), in which he tells of his escape from a battle his forces were losing against the Athenians. Melanippos is also the addressee of fragment 38A. The poem does not indicate which specific military setback provides its background, but Alkaïos and his comrades evidently are in need of consolation after this latest defeat. Invoking myth, the poet tries to convince his friend to resign himself to fate and to join him in revelry while they can:

Drink and get drunk, Melanippos, with me. Why  
do you suppose that when you have crossed the great river  
of eddying Acheron you will see again the sun's pure light?  
Come, do not aim at great things:

Why, king Sisypheus, son of Aeolus, wisest of men,  
supposed that he (was master of Death?);

but despite his cunning he crossed eddying Acheron twice  
at fate's command, and king Zeus, son of Kronos,

devised a toil for him to have under the black earth. <sup>37</sup>  
Come, do not hope for these things; now if ever,

while we are young, it is fit to endure  
whatever of these things God may give us to suffer.

... the North wind ...<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Bykthis is also mentioned in a scholium on fragment 60(a).

<sup>37</sup> Sisypheus told his wife not to conduct his funeral rites and then obtained Hades' permission to return to earth to punish her. Once back, however, he stayed and lived to old age. On his second arrival in the underworld, he was punished for his trickery and sentenced to the eternal task of rolling a rock up a hill from which it would always roll down again.

<sup>38</sup> Fragment 38B, which has the following broken phrases, "... the North wind / ... city / ... lyre / ... under the roof / ... share ...," may well be part of the same poem. If so, it seems that Alkaïos goes on to describe the festivities that he has just urged his companions to carry on.

Here Alkaïos offers his comrade the same advice that we have seen before: practice forbearance and resignation, and prepare for the new struggles that may lie ahead. The tenacity of the comrades, judging from the same poetry, is a result of their devotion to a common cause and of the time that they have spent together both on and off the battlefield. The comrades devise plans, exchange thoughts, foster intimacies, and promote confidence and trust in each other at their drinking parties. If thus far the examples of convivial gatherings we have seen are those that allow the men to nurse their injured pride and gather strength for a renewed fight, that is not all. There are also moments when joyous celebrations are touched off by good news, such as in fragment 332:

Now must men get drunk and drink  
with all their strength, since Myrsilos has died.

The celebration that the poet calls for can be better understood if we keep in mind poems such as fragment 70 and fragment 72, in which Alkaïos lashes out against the drunken revelry of his enemies. Not only does he call Myrsilos and Pittakos at their feast “empty braggarts,” but he also abuses Pittakos’ father for allegedly holding drinking orgies. If wine and song help hold Alkaïos’ comrades together through numerous setbacks, the death of an archenemy will also give them good reason to revel and sing “with all their strength.”

Aside from the poet’s comrades, handsome boys also graced Alkaian symposia, where pederastic relationships seem to have flourished as they did elsewhere in Greece from the seventh century BCE onward.<sup>39</sup> In fragment 368, the speaker says:

I request that charming Menon be invited,  
if I am to enjoy the drinking party.

Elsewhere, a one-line fragment (fragment 366) reads, “Wine, dear boy, and truth.” It contains the same message as fragment 333, “For wine is a peep-hole into a man.” Both echo an important theme in the *Theognidea* and the *Attic Skolia*, as we will see. It may be that, true to the code of Greek pederasty, the Alkaian poet played the role of an educator with his beloved, instructing the youth on the value of learning to

<sup>39</sup> On symposia as important contexts for pederasty in Archaic and classical Greece, see Bremmer (1990). For Alkaïos’ reputation as a pederastic lover, see test. 21 in the Loeb edition, p. 228, and also Anakreon test. 7 in *Greek Lyric*, 2: 28. Greek pederasty has a huge literature. See, among many others, the collection of ancient sources in Hubbard (2003) and studies by Buffière (1980), Percy (1996), and Scanlon (2002).

observe personalities and behaviors and to distinguish between friends and enemies and between truth and falsity in the sympotic context.<sup>40</sup> His portrayals of Pittakos and Myrsilos as traitors and his celebration of the bond among his steadfast comrades were constant, living illustrations of any abstract teaching on “good” and “bad” that he might have imparted to the boy from time to time. There is little other evidence in the Alkaian corpus to substantiate a pedagogic relationship. This absence may not be because Alkaios was too involved in factional strife to devote much attention to pursuing the friendship of a young lover and cultivating his growth as warrior, politician, and citizen. Such an undertaking would have been important for a man whose whole career was taken up with partisan politics and armed battle. As has been observed of Alkaios’ love of boys, “the beautiful Boys were involved in the faction-fighting too, as if *erōs* was being deployed to enroll new members and to bind them each to each other.”<sup>41</sup> Instead, the limited presence of boys in extant Alkaian poetry (despite the poet’s reputation in antiquity as a lover of boys) may relate to the selective preservation of ancient texts. Whereas Theognis, the poet to be discussed in a moment, appeared largely as an educator and lover of youths, the defining persona found for Alkaios was that of a vociferous poet, staunch fighter, and loyal comrade.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, both images entail the passionate embrace of extrafamilial homosocial bonding in a competitive setting among peers and peers in the making.

### The *Theognidea*

If it is necessary to distinguish between persona and historical personage in reading Alkaian poetry as a representative voice in the expression of Greek convivial experience, even greater caution is called for when we come to the *Theognidea*. The fact that the corpus consists of verses of similar form and ethos but of disparate provenances makes it difficult to speak of the personality and experience of a single historical poet from sixth-century BCE Megara named Theognis.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, the

<sup>40</sup> Bremmer (1990: 137) takes pederastic love as the subject and the symposium as the context of fragment 366.

<sup>41</sup> Davidson (2007: 496).

<sup>42</sup> Lefkowitz (1981) examines how selective preservation was responsible for many biases in later perceptions of ancient Greek poets and points out the autobiographical fallacy that modern readers of Greek poetry continue to commit when attempting to extract the poets’ personalities and intentions from the fragments.

<sup>43</sup> The poems can be dated on internal grounds to the period 640–479 BCE (Cobb-Stevens, Figueira, and Nagy 1985: 1).

analyses that follow bear on the persona under the name of Theognis rather than on the historical aristocrat of Megara. However, because the renowned collection amalgamates gnomic statements and lines that are securely attested in other famous Greek poets, it can be used as an excellent gauge of the Hellenic social code in the Archaic and early classical periods.<sup>44</sup> The prominence of the sympotic context and the pederastic relationships in the Theognidean corpus makes it particularly valuable to our inquiry. The symposium was a major venue for pederastic courtship, and in fulfilling that role it may have been the successor to the common meal of the ancient warrior clubs that supervised the education and socialization of the young.<sup>45</sup> According to Oswyn Murray, the old warrior group “was transformed into a leisure group under the impact of the changed position of the aristocracy, in a world where their military function had been taken over by the hoplite army of the polis.”<sup>46</sup> As I will argue, the essence of the warrior ethos did not disappear with the functional transformation of the aristocratic drinking group but continued to define the goal of the cultural transmission carried out at the Theognidean symposium.

Many couplets in the *Theognidea* deal with the pleasures of drinking parties, and the poet often advises on correct convivial practices and comments on the behavior of guests.<sup>47</sup> He gives the most attention, however, to friendship. Thus, he speaks about the supreme delights of good company:

I would not have any new pursuit arise for me  
in place of delightful art. Rather may I have this for mine,

<sup>44</sup> The anthology edited by Thomas J. Figueira and Gregory Nagy (1985) treats as its starting point that the *Theognidea* represents a crystallization of Archaic and early classical Megarian poetic traditions but far transcends parochialism and can claim pan-Hellenic significance.

<sup>45</sup> Pederasty does not appear in Homer. Levine (1985) and J. Lewis (1985) specifically address the sympotic context and the theme of pederasty in the Theognidean corpus, focusing on the connections between the symposium and the community, between poetry and ethics, and between erotics and politics.

<sup>46</sup> Murray (1983a); Bremmer (1990: 136). For Murray (1991: 99), this transformation represents one of the two ways that the Homeric and Dorian warrior group underwent development in the age of the hoplite army. In the other way, the rituals of commensality in the old warrior group were remodeled so that they might be extended to the entire hoplite-citizen class. The radical representative of this other way was Sparta, where all the male citizens devoted themselves to a military life and ate together at the daily common messes (*syssitōi*). Schmitt-Pantel (1990b: 202–203) makes a similar typological distinction. For the Spartan common mess, see Singor (1999).

<sup>47</sup> Pleasures, e.g., lines 531–532, 533–534, 885–886, 983–988, 993–996, 1055–1058; advice and comments, e.g., 295–298, 467–496, 509–510, 627–628, 837–840, 841–844, 873–876, 989–990, 1047–1048.

evermore rejoicing in lyre and dance and song,  
 and keeping my wit high in the company of the good.  
 (lines 789–792)

How to distinguish between good and bad convivial company (*agathoi* and *kakoi*, a dichotomy that carries both social and moral implications) preoccupies Theognis. He seems to be directing his messages to two audiences: his fellow banqueters, namely, adult men who are full symposia participants, and male adolescents who attend banquets under the guardianship of their older relatives or of the men who pursue pederastic relationships with them. We will focus on the latter audience because a substantial number of the Theognidean verses are addressed to a youth named Kyrnos, Theognis' beloved.

Immediately following the invocations to gods and goddesses in the first eighteen verses of the *Theognidea*, Theognis addresses Kyrnos. Calling himself "famous throughout the world," Theognis declares his authorship of the collection and states its purpose: the education of Kyrnos.<sup>48</sup> He assures his young beloved, "It is with good intent to you, Kyrnos, / that I shall give you counsels which I learned from good men in my own childhood" (lines 27–28). This education through pederastic relationships occurs most importantly in a convivial context, and it is first of all about learning to cultivate worthy associations in that context:

Do not consort with the bad  
 but ever cleave onto the good:  
 at their tables eat and drink, sit with them,  
 and please them, for their power is great.  
 Of good men shall you learn good,  
 but if you mingle with the bad, you shall even lose the wit  
 you have already. Consort therefore with the good,  
 and someday you will say that I counsel my friends aright.  
 (lines 31–38)

Elsewhere, Theognis expresses his faith in education through proper socialization and again exhorts the boy to take advantage of the sympotic occasions to observe, imitate, and learn from good men:

The bad are not all bad from the womb,  
 but have learned base works and unholy words

<sup>48</sup> Discussing the *Theognidea* in terms of the education and socialization of Kyrnos, Levine (1985) argues that the symposium figures in the poems as a microcosm and model of the larger community.

and wanton outrage from friendship with the bad  
because they thought all they said was true.

(lines 305–308)

It is well to be guest at a feast and sit beside a good man  
That knows all learning. Him you should mark  
When he says anything wise, so that you may learn  
And go home with so much gained.

(lines 563–566)

It follows that the first thing Kyrnos must learn is how to distinguish between true friends and false friends.<sup>49</sup> Theognis points out that there are few comrades who will share one's bad luck as well as good fortune and that friends tend to disappear in times of difficulty (lines 79–82, 209–210, 697–698). Teaching by example, Theognis portrays himself as a most loyal friend, and he constantly denounces false friendship and betrayal. Having never betrayed his friends, he is a "true comrade free of guile," who emerges from the test as true gold appears when put to the touchstone (lines 415–418, 529–530, 1164E–H). Just as he indulges in such self-appreciation, he also grieves that, despite his search, he has been unable to find anyone like himself (lines 415–418, 1164E–H). The drinking parties are particularly good contexts for observing the dark reality about false friendship and fair-weather friends. Theognis repeatedly makes this point:

Many, for sure, are cup-and-trencher friends,<sup>50</sup>  
but few a man's comrades in a grave matter.

(lines 115–116)

Many become comrades dear (*philoi hetairoi*) beside the mixing bowl,  
but few do so in a grave matter.

(lines 643–644)

I would have no man my friend with lips only, but also in deed.  
He must serve me willingly both with hands and with possessions.  
Nor must he soothe my heart with words beside the mixing bowl,  
but show himself a good man by act, if he so may.

(lines 979–982)

The type of cup-and-trencher friend just criticized Theognis elsewhere calls a "dangerous comrade" (*hetairos deinos*), asserting that it is

<sup>49</sup> Donlan (1985) analyzes this prominent Theognidean theme.

<sup>50</sup> *Polloi toi posios kai brōsios eisin hetairoi*.

better to have an enemy than such an associate (lines 87–92). Again and again, however, the poet complains about the difficulty of distinguishing a true friend from a false one. In lines 119–128, for example, Theognis tells Kyrnos that it is harder to recognize a counterfeit friend than to detect counterfeit gold or silver. There is no way to know the mind behind a man's face, and, although it is the most grievous discovery to make in the world, a false friend can be revealed only through trial and test. As he admits, Theognis himself is no wiser than the rest (lines 963–970). Taken in by someone's feigned appearance of friendship, he saw through it only as time passed. Theognis also expresses envy for those who die without having suffered at the hands of their enemies or having had to test their friends' loyalty (lines 1013–1016). To his sorrow, it is much easier to be cheated by a friend than by an enemy (lines 1219–1220).

Such being Theognis' view of the treacheries of friendship, he teaches Kyrnos the skills of flexibility, maintaining superficial contact, and adapting to one's environment so that the young man can cope with a dangerous reality. The symposium, where youths have the opportunity to observe and learn adult ways, offers a setting in which to practice such teachings. In lines 309–312, Theognis gives advice on how to carry oneself in a company of guests:

Your wise man seems to be one of his company  
and yet all they say or do seems to escape him  
as if he were not there. He contributes his jests and is outwardly  
patient, seeking to know the temper of each guest.

Just as the appearance of being a friend, especially when the friendship has been made over the wine cup, is often deceptive, a man should conceal his own mind and reveal only his surface to his companions. He should be agreeable and engaging on the outside but remote and vigilant inside. Refusing to take seriously whatever pleasing things he hears and sees in the jovial and intimate atmosphere of the banquet hall, he closely scrutinizes everyone around him and conducts tests of true friendship. Such adaptability, as Theognis puts it, is a skill (*sophiē*) of greater worth than steadfast virtue.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup> In lines 213–218, for example, Theognis famously exhorts himself to act like an octopus or polyp toward friends: "Turn, my heart, towards all friends a changeful habit, / mingling your disposition to be like each. / Let your disposition be that of the convolved polyp, / which takes the semblance of the rock he converses with; / now be guided this way, and now be different hue. / Surely skill is better than



The preceding discussion seems to confirm the normative paradigm of Greek pederasty: the lover courts the beloved by expressing admiration and attachment and helps the young man mature by passing on his knowledge and opinions, and the beloved improves himself by learning to respond to the lover's courtship and by modeling his own actions on the older man's teachings. The symposium was a major venue for these interactions, and poetry played a vital role. However, the transmission of wisdom, skills, and values was not all that the Theognidean banqueter and lover sought. Besides the salubrious aspects of Greek pederasty as it was ideally conceived, Theognis' verses disclose the rich complex of emotions that pederastic love involved.<sup>52</sup>

We come to a world convulsed by constant pain, competition, betrayal, and revenge. Pursuing and yielding furnish the basic language of pederastic courtship,<sup>53</sup> as can be clearly seen in lines 1283–1294. In these lines, the poet invokes the myth of Atalanta, the nimble-footed maiden and huntress who vows never to marry and kills every suitor who loses in a footrace against her. Eventually, she yields to Hippomenes, who wins the race with help from Aphrodite. The poet believes that the boy who has been running away from being courted by him will experience a similar fate. In keeping with the hunting and chasing motif of the Atalanta myth, the poet asserts that, despite the boy's temporary success in evading and deceiving him, "I will wound you as you fly away from me" (line 1287).<sup>54</sup> Elsewhere, Theognis vows the same, trying to persuade the boy by reminding him that he will no longer enjoy the status of a courted beloved when he grows out of adolescence and loses the favor of Aphrodite, the love goddess (the "Kypros-born"):

How long will you fly me, boy? How hotfoot do I pursue you!  
Heaven grant some end may come to your anger.  
Yet you fly me in the greed and haughtiness of your heart,

unchangeableness." Lines 1071–1074, addressed to Kynos, impart the same lesson (without invoking the polyph metaphor).

<sup>52</sup> These verses are concentrated in the so-called Book 2 (lines 1231–1388) of the *Theognidea*. According to Knox (1989: 101), "It seems fairly certain that the contents of Book 2 were once distributed throughout the collection, and were extracted to form a separate unit during the Byzantine period."

<sup>53</sup> The same idiom is also used for both heterosexual courtship and female homoeroticism (Barringer 2001, ch. 2; Rissman 1983, with the revealing title *Love as War*).

<sup>54</sup> J. Lewis (1985: 214–219) argues that in comparing the beloved boy to the mythical huntress who had to be reintegrated into civilization by being domesticated within her husband's house, Theognis understands pederasty to be an institution that tames and educates the adolescent boy who occupies a marginal position in society and awaits incorporation into the community of male aristocrats.

and your ways are the cruel ways of a kite.  
 O stay and grant me your favor. Not for long  
 will you possess the gift of the violet-crowned Kypros-born.  
 (lines 1299–1304)

Depending on the success or failure of the pursuit, the lover will be experiencing entirely different emotions, as seen in the following:

Bitter and sweet, charming and harsh, Kyrnos,  
 is love (*erōs*) of the young until it is fulfilled.  
 For if a man achieves, it becomes sweet, and if he pursues  
 and achieves not, that is of all things the most painful.  
 (lines 1353–1356)

In many places Theognis speaks of the pain inherent in the feeling of love,<sup>55</sup> but what afflicts him most is when the boy abandons him for a rival. On such occasions the poet cries “deception” and “betrayal,” using the same rhetoric as when he instructs Kyrnos about the difficulties of friendship. Here are two examples:

We have been friends long enough; now you consort with others,  
 Keeping your crafty ways that are so contrary to loyalty.  
 (lines 1243–1244)

I know well enough that you did cheat me, lad. For I can  
 even see through you. Those with whom you are now  
 so close and friendly, abandoning for worthless  
 your friendship for me, with them you were not friends before.  
 Whereas I, I thought to make you of all my comrades  
 the truest, and now you have another as your friend. I who  
 did well by you lie neglected. I would that no man living  
 who shall see you may be willing to set his love on you.  
 (lines 1311–1318)

Lines 1311–1318 are studded with the vocabulary of friendship and companionship: *philos* (lines 1312 and 1314), *philotēta* (line 1313), *hetairon piston* (lines 1315–1316), and *philon* (1316). The fact that the poet speaks of his relationship with the boy (the word *paidophilein* appears in line 1318), alternately using friendship terms and *erōs* (as in line 1354, quoted earlier, with its connotation of intense desire), indicates that the two kinds of sentiments – friendly affection and passionate love – form a continuum in the Theognidean conception of the pederastic

<sup>55</sup> See, e.g., lines 1323–1326, 1341–1344, and 1359–1360.

relationship.<sup>56</sup> Pederasty is about the cultivation of both friendship and love, and the poet's feeling of having been betrayed is the feeling of both a comrade and a lover.

As the aggrieved poet sees it, the boy betrays him because of the calumny of bad companions. In lines 1101–1104, Theognis foresees the destructive effect such counsels will have on his relationship with the boy, and he expresses his fear of this prospect thus:

Never be persuaded by the words of men of the baser sort  
to leave the friend you have and seek another. For it's certain  
they will often say vain things, against you before me,  
and against me before you. So turn them a deaf ear.

(lines 1238A–1240)<sup>57</sup>

Obviously, failing to heed this advice, the boy has left Theognis and chosen someone else as a mentor. Theognis bears his defeat in a variety of ways. There are the indignant charges that we see every time Theognis speaks about betrayal. Theognis even generalizes that a boy will embrace whomever is around and has something to offer him, just as a horse, will carry any rider who feeds it.<sup>58</sup> He also resorts to bitter curses, such as when he expresses the wishes that, because of the betrayal the youth has inflicted on him, no man will ever love the boy again (line 1318). Theognis also strives to maintain his dignity, as in the following:

Fair as you are, you consort, through the badness of your mind,  
with base men, and for this, lad, you bear foul reproach. Though I have  
failed, through no fault of my own, to win your friendship, I have  
the satisfaction of doing what a freeman like me should do.

(lines 1377–1380)

As the poet self-righteously asserts here, he has nothing to blame himself for in this breakup. He has pursued his love and accepted his unjust treatment in a noble way. Such forbearance goes with the confidence Theognis has about his art, wisdom, passion, and nobility, which he

<sup>56</sup> On the ambiguity of and continuity between erotic attachment and friendly attachment (*erōs* and *philia*) in Greek sources, see Davidson (2007, ch. 1) and Konstan (1997: 37–39). *Philos* and *philia* are also frequently used for members of the family (Humphreys 1983: 67). On similar semantic overlap in ancient Chinese sources, see Chapter 2.

<sup>57</sup> See also lines 1151–1152 and 1278A–1278B.

<sup>58</sup> See also lines 1263–1266. Cf. lines 1367–1368, where the poet speaks of the gratitude of boys in contrast to the response of courtesans, who love anyone who is close at hand.

believes will make him a competitive and the most worthy lover. We see this in one of the best-known and most beautiful passages in the corpus, which also makes it clear that the symposium is *the* context for Theognis' poetry on pederastic love:

I have given you wings to fly with ease  
aloft the boundless sea and all the land.  
No meal or feast will not see your presence,  
couched between the lips of many a guest,  
and lovely youths shall sing of you, clear, well,  
and orderly to the clear-voiced flute.  
And when you go down to the lamentable house of Hades  
in the depths of the gloomy earth, never, though dead,  
will you lose your fame, but men will think of you  
as one of immortal name, Kynos. You range the land and isles  
of Greece, crossing the fishy unharvestable deep  
not upon horseback mounted but sped of the glorious gifts  
of the violet-crowned Muses  
onto all that care to receive you.  
Living as they, you will be a song unto posterity  
so long as Earth and Sun abide. Yet as for me,  
you have no respect for me, great or small,  
but deceived me with words as if I were a little child.

(lines 237–254)

These verses fall into two main parts. The first part includes all but the last couplet and is given over to Theognis' praise of the effects of his own art. By claiming pan-Hellenic fame and immortality for his poetry, Theognis promises the same for Kynos, who is the privileged subject of the poetry. Neither the seas that separate the many cities of Greece nor hated, inevitable death will be obstacles to the spread of Theognis' songs about Kynos; as long as the earth exists, the sun shines, and men need convivial life, those songs will circulate at every drinking party in the Greek world. Such is Theognis' conviction about the power of the art that he devotes to expressing his love for Kynos and to making the boy an immortal figure.

After the lyric outpouring of these lines, the revelation in the last couplet of the poem, about the boy's deception, is a shock, but not enough of one to erase our impression of a man who is extremely confident in his own worth and charms. While denouncing Kynos for his betrayal, and no doubt feeling hurt, Theognis appears to have more than sufficient faith that he is a superior lover and tutor. Any rival would pale before him, and any boy would regret not having yielded to him. If the

poet willingly submits to the torture of love, he also ultimately is the hunter. Wooing a tender boy at the symposia, this lover is pursuing a public life among his peers and peers in the making and with an eye on competition, victory, and honor. In the words of Henri Marrou, Greek pederasty was “in essence a comradeship of warriors.”<sup>59</sup>

Such congruity with these cherished Greek values perhaps explains why, despite the pessimism and anger that Theognis constantly expresses about human relationships (almost exclusively about friendship), the poet was celebrated in Greece as a moral teacher. Making the sympotic discourse the vehicle for his wisdom and placing the beautiful boy at the center of his variegated emotions, Theognis served as self-appointed spokesperson for the Greeks. The pan-Hellenic significance of the *Theognidea* has been well recognized.<sup>60</sup> As Theognis promised Kynos, his winged verses have achieved posthumous fame, as have the drinking parties they celebrate and the capricious beloved who put him in the role, in turn, of mentor, friend, hunter, and victim.

### The Attic Skolia

Friendship is a prominent theme in the collection of drinking songs known as the *Attic Skolia*. All of the songs are two to four lines in length, and most of them echo Theognis in their contents and concerns.<sup>61</sup> Like the *Theognidea*, these brief pieces display a wary attitude toward friendship. For example, no. 889 and no. 903 read:

If only it were possible to see what everyone is like  
by opening his breast and having looked at his mind  
to close it up again and regard the man  
as one's friend (*philon*) for his guileless heart.  
(no. 889)

Under every stone, my friend (*hetaire*), a scorpion lurks.  
Take care that it does not strike you: all manner  
of guile accompanies what is unseen.  
(no. 903)

<sup>59</sup> Marrou (1956: 51).

<sup>60</sup> See note 44 above.

<sup>61</sup> Konstan (1997: 44–47, 65–66) discusses the *Attic Skolia* as part of the culture of aristocratic youths in fifth-century BCE Athens. Aside from thematic parallels, Collins (2004, ch. 9) argues that the *Attic Skolia* and the *Theognidea* share a heritage of sympotic improvisation and both give evidence of being performance variations.

As in the *Theognidea*, the caution expressed about friendship in the *Attic Skolia* should be understood in terms of the great importance associated with friendship in these songs. Several of the most famous songs in the corpus, those dedicated to Harmodios and Aristogeiton, pay high tribute to genuine friendship and male homoerotic attachment.

Harmodios, a handsome youth, was the beloved of Aristogeiton. In 514 BCE, they were both killed in the act of assassinating Hipparkhos, the brother of the Athenian tyrant Hippias.<sup>62</sup> Hipparkhos had pursued Harmodios and, after being rejected by him, had sought vengeance. In response, the lovers took the opportunity of the procession at the Panathenaic festival (honoring Athena, patron goddess of Athens) to carry out the assassination. The deed of Harmodios and Aristogeiton quickly became a cherished Athenian legend. Despite historical inaccuracies, the lovers were persistently hailed as the liberators of Athens, which did not actually become a democracy until 508/507 BCE. Their statues were placed in the agora; a tomb was built in their honor; their descendants received public maintenance; and drinking songs such as the following commemorated them at the symposia:

I shall carry my sword in a spray of myrtle,  
like Harmodios and Aristogeiton  
when they killed the tyrant  
and made Athens a city of equal rights.  
(no. 893)

Dearest Harmodios, you cannot be dead,  
no, they say you are in the isles of the blessed,  
where swift-footed Achilles is  
and, they say, Tydeos' son, Diomedes.  
(no. 894)

I shall carry my sword in a spray of myrtle,  
like Harmodios and Aristogeiton  
when at the festival of Athena  
they killed the tyrant Hipparkhos.  
(no. 895)

You two will always have glory on the earth,  
dearest Harmodios and Aristogeiton,

<sup>62</sup> The Greek term *tyrannos* is to be distinguished from the modern "tyrant." Liddell and Scott's Greek lexicon, which translates *tyrannos* as "an absolute sovereign," explains that the term "regards the irregular way in which the power was *gained*, [rather] than the way in which it was *exercised*, being applied to the mild Pisistratos, but not to the despot kings of Persia. However, the word soon came to imply reproach, like our *tyrant*."

because you killed the tyrant  
and made Athens a city of equal rights.  
(no. 896)

The glorification of Harmodios and Aristogeiton and the vitality of the tradition about their being the liberators of Athens, despite the denials made by the formidable chorus of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Aristotle, seem “totally illogical,” according to John V. A. Fine.<sup>63</sup> While referring the reader to Fine for the historical and political perspective,<sup>64</sup> I suggest that the Athenians’ exaltation of the lovers’ deed made good sense in light of the strong male homosocial bond that inhered in the Greek tradition of heroism and which received a new boost during the classical period.

There already were the exemplars of Achilles and Patroklos (first considered to be lovers in the classical period), and now, in the popular Athenian imagination, Harmodios and Aristogeiton joined the company of the legendary Homeric couple.<sup>65</sup> Harmodios died an honorable death as he slew a vengeful former admirer, and Aristogeiton proved himself a worthy lover by giving up his life in defense of his beloved’s honor. Noble in itself, the couple’s action was further elevated by the fact that the target of their assassination was a prominent member of a tyrannical government that in a few years was to be overthrown and denigrated. Concerned less with historical accuracy than with having two heroes whose deed could exemplify their love of freedom and ennoblement of male homoeroticism, the citizens of Athens readily embraced the “false” and “extravagant” tradition about Harmodios and Aristogeiton.

Of all the tributes that the two heroic Athenian lovers received, the drinking songs that recalled their deed perpetuated their names in a context that must have nourished their bond during their lives. In

<sup>63</sup> Fine (1983: 223). He mentions a public document dated to 264/263 BCE in which Harmodios and Aristogeiton continue to be named as Athens’ liberators (p. 225).

<sup>64</sup> Fine (1983: 222–225) offers a lucid discussion of the historical circumstances surrounding the rise of the Harmodios and Aristogeiton tradition, which, according to him, mainly had to do with the political struggles between the aristocratic Alkmaionids and the tyrannical Pisistratids.

<sup>65</sup> In his court speech against Timarkhos, a citizen accused of male prostitution, the Athenian orator and statesman Aiskhines (390/389–314 BCE) anticipates that Timarkhos will defend himself by invoking the love between such heroic couples as Patroklos and Achilles and Harmodios and Aristogeiton. That the two pairs were mentioned on a par points to the high regard in which the Athenian couple was held. On the eroticization of the relationship between Achilles and Patroklos in the classical period, see Cantarella (2002: 11). See Dover (1978: 19–109) for a discussion of Aiskhines’ speech.

declaring the two to be immortals in the company of Achilles, the archetypal hero (no. 894), the Athenian symposiasts expressed their admiration for and desire to emulate the ideals represented by that company. The lines “I shall carry my sword in a spray of myrtle, / like Harmodios and Aristogeiton” appears in two of the songs quoted earlier. Although the juxtaposition of a murderous weapon and an inherent part of Greek convivial paraphernalia may seem jarring, it is not. At the Panathenaic procession, Harmodios and Aristogeiton may well have concealed their swords in festive myrtle branches, and it was also the custom for the symposiasts to hold a myrtle branch in their hands when they sang drinking songs. Behind these was a rich literary tradition to help us appreciate this uncannily inspiring combination of the warlike and the convivial. We are reminded again of Odysseus’ heroic revenge in his banquet hall and of Alkaios’ fond survey of the weapons on the walls of the hall in which he and his comrades renew their vow to fight. Perhaps different is that instead of being limited to an interior setting and a small aristocratic group, the heroics of the two Athenian lovers played out in public at the very center of Athens and became a prominent and enduring symbol of the city for Athenians and barbarians alike.<sup>66</sup> When, as they went about their daily business, Athenians cast their eyes on the couple’s statues in the agora, they were being invited to admire a personal passion that was thought capable of engendering the highest political virtue and to develop both an intense love for their city and a strong sense of pride in being worthy members of the civic community.<sup>67</sup> The significance of the Harmodios-Aristogeiton myth may lie in its unprecedented eroticization and politicization of male homosocial bonds. Perhaps the legend took hold of the Athenian imagination because its vision of a cooperative yet emulative community generated by male homoeroticism

<sup>66</sup> When the Persians invaded Athens in 480 BCE, they carried off the statues of Harmodios and Aristogeiton; the Athenians put up a new set in 477/476 BCE.

<sup>67</sup> What Perikles (ca. 495–429 BCE) said at the end of the first year of the Peloponnesian War in his famous funeral speech in honor of the Athenian war dead readily comes to mind. Perikles exhorted the Athenians to maintain their daring spirit against the formidable Spartans by persevering in their love for their city: “You should fix your eyes every day on the greatness of Athens as she really is, and should *fall in love with her* (*erastas gignomenous autēs*)” (Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2.43, Penguin tr., emphasis mine). The numerous public monuments (from temples to statues) that had been built under the democracy were no doubt among the objects that Perikles urged the patriotic Athenians to contemplate daily. Ludwig (2002: 160–161) and Monson (2000: 21–50) discuss the political character of Eros in classical Athenian discourse in the light of the Harmodios-Aristogeiton legend.



perfectly embodied the agonistic spirit of Greek ethics of solidarity from Homer onward.<sup>68</sup>

### Socrates at Parties

Socrates, as portrayed by his disciples Plato and Xenophon, fits the characterization of the Theognidean banqueter, lover, and educator. Like his contemporary Athenians, Socrates held Theognis in high regard and freely invoked the wisdom of the Megarian poet in his own associations with young people in various sociable contexts: "Consort with the good."<sup>69</sup> In keeping with his subscription to this Theognidean teaching, Socrates as remembered by his two disciples never foregoes the opportunities to meet, court, and instruct boys in the gymnasia, the wrestling schools, and, of course, the symposia. Plato and Xenophon each wrote a dialogue called the *Symposium* to dramatize their master as a passionate and astute votary of Eros in a setting that is both convivial and pedagogical. If Xenophon's portrayal emphasizes Socrates' urbanity and tactfulness in his sympotic conduct and discourse, Plato's creates an image that is more lofty and forceful.

In the "hymn to Socrates" that closes the series of eulogies to male love in Plato's *Symposium*, Alkibiades (ca. 450–404 BCE), a handsome young aristocrat and former associate and protégé of Socrates, accuses Socrates, whom he is eulogizing, of being a lover who is relentlessly seductive in using his intellect to make conquests but is disdainful of and unresponsive to the physical appeal of his youthful admirers. Alkibiades himself was one of those youths who attempted to barter their beauty for Socrates' sexual favor instead of completely submit to his philosophical bewitchment and join him in the quest for a vision of the highest, Ideational Beauty. Curiously, near the climax of this eulogy cum indictment of Socrates, the drunken and bitter Alkibiades throws in a rather detailed account of Socrates' military deeds. He portrays the philosopher as a hardy and steadfast soldier and a brave and selfless comrade in battle. According to Alkibiades, Socrates saved his life in the battle at Potidaia in 432 BCE; eight years later, at Delium, the example of the exceptional composure and bravery of Socrates helped the troops,

<sup>68</sup> Ludwig (2002: 28–39) also sees the encouragement of cooperative rivalry as a key to what he calls "political pederasty" in Greece.

<sup>69</sup> In Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (1.2.20) and *Symposium* (2.4), Socrates quotes Theognis 35–36 to illustrate how important it was for youths to keep good society and to stay away from bad company.

who were in utter disorder, accomplish a successful retreat (Pl. *Symp.* 220d–221c).

There is nothing odd about the turn from the sympotic-erotic to the warlike-civic in Alkibiades' eulogy. According to Plato, Socrates cited the example of Achilles at his trial in 399 BCE, at which he was sentenced to death for corrupting his young associates with heterodox ideas (Pl. *Apology* 28c). Evoking Achilles' unhesitating embrace of death to avenge a fallen comrade, Socrates explains his own choice of philosophical martyrdom in his address to the jury and his fellow citizens:

I should have done a terrible thing, if, when the commanders whom you chose to command me stationed me, both at Potidaia and at Amphipolis and at Delium, I remained where they stationed me, like anybody else, and ran the risk of death, but when the god gave me a station, as I believed and understood, with orders to spend my life in philosophy and in examining myself and others, then I were to desert my post through fear of death or anything else whatsoever. (*Apology* 28d–e)

Though he avoided a political career,<sup>70</sup> Socrates lived an intensely public life. He incited fear or adoration among his contemporaries and disciples, both as a citizen-soldier who was active alike on the battlefield and in the agora and as an educator-lover who cornered his rivals and captivated his audiences and associates in the gymnasia, wrestling schools, and symposia.<sup>71</sup> Although he examined and cross-examined everyone he met, Athenian or foreigner, he made it clear that he took his fellow citizens as the major objects of his debates because they were more closely related to him than the foreigners were (Pl. *Apology* 30a). To Plato and Xenophone, the kind of attachment that Socrates demonstrated for his fellow citizens in various public venues made him an exemplary citizen-soldier and lover. As Socrates repeatedly declares in Xenophon's *Symposium*, he cannot name a time when he was not in love

<sup>70</sup> Socrates repeatedly makes this point in Plato's *Apology*. At 31d, he says that if he had gone into politics, he would have been put to death long before.

<sup>71</sup> These form the backdrops for most of the Socratic dialogues by both Plato and Xenophon. In *Apology* 17c, Socrates states that he is accustomed to speaking in the agora and other public places. Later, he confidently asserts that "if any man says that he ever learned or heard anything privately from me, which all the others did not, be assured that he is lying" (*Apology* 33b). In *Memorabilia* I.10, Xenophon defends Socrates against the charge of religious impiety by pointing out that the philosopher "lived ever in the open," that is, in the public promenades, the gymnasia, and the agora.

with someone. Moreover, he has devoted his life to teaching virtue to young men for the sake of their city.<sup>72</sup>

Consistent with the generally milder disposition that he confers on his master, Xenophon, in his *Symposium*, presents Socrates mostly as an urbane banqueter (in contrast to his often prickly Platonic counterpart). With the exception of one long speech on pederastic love, Socrates' pedagogical attempts are tactfully kept in line with the convivial norm.<sup>73</sup> We can glimpse the style of Xenophon's Socrates in an episode that occurs early in the gathering described in the *Symposium*.

Kallias, a prominent Athenian citizen, hosts a party at his house in honor of his boy beloved, Autolykos, who has won a victory in the boys' pankration at the Panathenaia of 421 BCE.<sup>74</sup> While the banqueters recline on couches, dine and converse, the boy sits beside his father, Lykon, partaking of the feast and quietly listening to the conversations.<sup>75</sup> At one point, when Socrates quotes Theognis to demonstrate the importance of keeping good company and avoiding bad company (lines 35–36), Lykon asks Autolykos, "Do you hear that, my son?" (Xen. *Symp.* 2.4–5). Instead of the boy, Socrates responds affirmatively, adding that Autolykos has already put this advice into practice by associating with champion athletes and becoming a prizewinner himself. Furthermore, Socrates points out that with Lykon's help Autolykos can find a mentor who is proficient in the art of living virtuously (Xen. *Symp.* 2.5).

Of course, along with everyone else in the city (Xen. *Symp.* 8.7), Socrates knows that one distinguished man who has already offered himself as Autolykos' tutor and lover is their host, Kallias. Kallias is repeatedly described in the dialogue as a person who is deeply in love. Although, as befits a noble boy beloved, Autolykos maintains his modest posture and rarely speaks during the gathering, his reciprocation

<sup>72</sup> Xen. *Symp.* 8.2 (*egō te gar ouk echō chronon eipein en hōi ouk erōn tinos diatelō*), 8.24 (*ho aei sunoikos emoi erōs*), 8.41 (*agathōn gar phusei kai tēs aretēs philotimōs ephiemēnōn aei pote tēi polei sunerastēs ōn diatelō*).

<sup>73</sup> See Y. Zhou (2005: 204–209) for an analysis of the contrasts between the descriptions of Socrates' convivial conduct and discourse in the two dialogues by Plato and Xenophon.

<sup>74</sup> The pankration was a brutal contest involving a combination of boxing and wrestling in which almost any move was permitted. In a later section I will focus on the festivals as public sociable contexts.

<sup>75</sup> At the symposia, as a mark of differentiation in age and status, adult males reclined and boys sat (Bremmer 1990: 139). Note lines 34 and 563 in Theognis' advice to Kyrnos (both quoted in the preceding section), "sit with them" and "sit beside a good man."

of Kallias' sentiments is revealed toward the end of the dialogue. At the conclusion of Socrates' long speech, the guests engage in a heated discussion during which Autolykos keeps his eyes fixed on Kallias, and Kallias, while talking to Socrates, looks beyond him and returns Autolykos' gaze (Xen. *Symp.* 8.42). This detail suggests that although Autolykos is supposed to benefit from listening to all of the conversations that night, at the center of which are Socrates' philosophical speeches, he pays most of his attention to Kallias, whose words and deeds presumably will have the greatest influence on the boy's development. This is why, while approving of Kallias' passion and urging him on, Socrates also takes pains to remind his host of the nobility and gravity of his mentoring duties (Xen. *Symp.* 8.6–11, 8.37–41). Recognizing the shrewdness of Socrates' approach, an admiring guest points out that in the very act of flattering Kallias Socrates is educating him to conform to the ideal code of pederastic love (Xen. *Symp.* 8.12). In keeping with his endorsement of the Theognidean teaching "consort with the good," and true to his reputation and self-identification as the most ardent educator and lover, Socrates treats Kallias as a fellow citizen engaged in raising the future defenders and legislators of Athens and does his best to have the drinking party contribute to that weighty purpose.<sup>76</sup> In contrast to the eulogies of reified Love and Beauty in the keynote speech ascribed to Socrates in the Platonic *Symposium*, the parallel discourse in Xenophon's work is striking for its firm grounding in the here and now, focused on an actual pederastic pair, Kallias and Autolykos, and concerned with the pragmatic obligations and techniques of the lover.

Plato and Xenophon, the writers of convivial dialogues, may have differed in their temperaments and aspirations, but they agreed on a key thing about Socrates. He is a citizen-soldier excited by his love for the Athenian commonwealth, which makes him embrace the company of his fellow citizens and of the city's rising young men as their challenger,

<sup>76</sup> According to Socrates, the goal for Autolykos should be "not merely to shed luster on himself and his father [*heauton kai ton patera kosmēsein*] but also to acquire through his manly virtue the ability to serve his friends and to exalt his country [*philous eu poiein kai tēn patriada auxein*] by setting up trophies of victory over its enemies, and for these reasons draw the admiring glances of all and be famous among both Greeks and barbarians" (Xen. *Symp.* 8.38). Therefore, as the tutor of such a promising boy, Kallias must try to obtain the sort of knowledge that distinguished such great men as Themistokles (ca. 528–462 BCE), the liberator of Greece; Perikles the wisest counselor of his country; and Solon (fl. 594 BCE) the legendary lawgiver. In addition, he must find out what made the Spartans preeminent military commanders (Xen. *Symp.* 8.39).

teacher, partner, and lover. Neither the gymnasium, nor the agora, nor the symposium can be said to have been more important than the others in Socrates' daily life. They merely furnished alternative sites for the expression of a single, coherent warrior ideal that would retain its core throughout Greek history. Socrates just happened to be the most devoted and gifted teacher in the "school for Eros" that was classical Athens.<sup>77</sup>

### Under the Sign of the Gods

The prominence enjoyed by the symposium in studies of Greek sociability is well deserved but also potentially misleading. On the one hand, there were other important convivial contexts that were not restricted to the banquet halls of aristocrats or well-to-do citizens. Religious festivals and public sacrifices were conducted with the aim of weaving and reinforcing a more inclusive social fabric. On the other hand, even if we keep within the sympotic context, we must not be so focused on the material and social aspects of the group pursuit of pleasure and fellowship that we forget that a religious dimension was integral to all such activities. As has been pointed out, it is improper to draw a line between "religious" and "secular" festivities in ancient Greece because there was seldom a feast without a sacrifice and almost every sacrifice was followed by a feast.<sup>78</sup>

This section first examines the religious backgrounds of the sympotic festivities in the works discussed in the preceding pages, from the epics of Homer to the two Socratic dialogues. Then we turn to the religious festivals, whose splendor, frequency, and highly agonistic character make them a hallmark of ancient Greek civilization. Both the festivals and the symposia, insofar as they took place under the sign of the gods, consecrated extrafamilial homosocial bonds through activities that

<sup>77</sup> "The polis as a school for Eros" is from Ludwig (2002: 259). Scholars have argued that the aristocratic drinking parties under Athenian democracy could have served as sites for the spreading of antidemocratic ideology and the hatching of conspiracies among the elite. In this sense, the drinking parties formed a space in opposition to the public civic feasts and festivals (e.g., Burkert 1991: 18; Dentzer 1982: 448–449; Murray 1990). Konstan (1997: 45–47, 65–67) does not see much evidence for this view and argues that the aristocratic drinking parties seem to have played only a marginal role in the politics of Athenian democracy. As already discussed here, the aristocratic drinking parties may no longer have had political significance in democratic Athens, but they were deeply ingrained in the civic ideology and continued to play a critical role in cultural production and reproduction.

<sup>78</sup> Schmitt-Pantel (1990a).

demanded both intense competition and close cooperation. How to understand the consistent emphasis on competitive companionship in relation to the importance of kinship ties in Greek social life will be addressed in the last part of this section by way of an analysis of the odes that Pindar and Bakchylides wrote for winners at athletic festivals. The stress on family tradition and noble birth in the celebrations of athletic success makes the victory odes a good choice for contextualizing and testing our argument about the centrality of competitive companionship in Greek convivial discourse.

### *Sacrifices and Banquets*

In Book 3 of the *Odyssey*, when Telemakhos journeys to Pylos and calls upon Nestor, Odysseus' comrade at Troy, seeking news about his long-missing father, he finds Nestor on the seashore, presiding over the Pylians' grand sacrifice to Poseidon, the sea god.<sup>79</sup> Welcomed by his host, Telemakhos participates in the sacrificial feast. "After they had put from them the desire of food and drink" (in the formulaic Homeric expression), Nestor begins to question his guest about the reason for his visit. They continue feasting as they ask questions of each other and tell stories, and, at the end of their conversation, Telemakhos joins his hosts in the pouring of libations and in more drinking in honor of both Poseidon and Athena.<sup>80</sup>

The close connection between feasts and sacrifices seen in this episode of the *Odyssey* can also be found in the suitors' daily revelry at Odysseus' house. As the loyal swineherd Eumaos laments to his disguised master, every day the suitors sacrifice more than just one or two victims (*Od.* 14.93–94). The suitors' transgressive and predatory festivity does not eliminate the request for divine blessing, an essential part of Greek convivial proceedings.

The Greeks credited Homer and Hesiod with the systematization of the lore of their gods (Herodotus, *Histories*, 2.53.2). The gods who preside over the numerous feasts in the *Odyssey*, including Apollo, Athena, and Poseidon, belonged to the same pan-Hellenic pantheon that every

<sup>79</sup> Forty-five hundred Pylians attend and 81 bulls are slaughtered for the sacrifice (*Od.* 3.7–8). Robert Parker (1996: 27), writing on Attic religion at the turn of the seventh century BCE, suggests that public rites at that time may have resembled the sacrifices led by Nestor in the *Odyssey*.

<sup>80</sup> *Od.* 3.5ff., 338ff. The honor is extended to Athena when Nestor discovers that Telemakhos' companion on this trip is actually the goddess in human guise (*Od.* 3.371–394).

Greek presumably would recognize wherever he went in Hellas.<sup>81</sup> As summarized by Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, the differences in the worship of the pan-Hellenic gods in various city-states from the eighth century BCE onward lay in the “precise articulation of the cult, its history, its particular modalities, which aspect of each deity each city chose to emphasize, which deities were perceived to be more closely connected with, and so more important to, the city, and so on.”<sup>82</sup> A few examples from the *Theognidea* and the *Attic Skolia* offer a glimpse of the sympotic presence of the pan-Hellenic gods in the Archaic and classical periods.

The first five poems in the *Attic Skolia* seem to have been popular hymns sung at parties; the gods invoked are Athena (twice, nos. 884 and 888), Demeter (no. 885), Apollo and Artemis (no. 886, praised together as twins), and Pan (no. 887). The gods also appear in the first eighteen verses of the *Theognidea*: Apollo (twice, lines 1–4, 5–10; and again later in the corpus), Artemis (lines 11–14), and the Muses and Graces (lines 15–18). Allusions to the deities’ births and attributes, expressions of piety, and appeals for blessings form the basic components of the songs addressed to gods in both collections. Protection for the city is a common one among the blessings sought, as, for example, in two songs from the *Attic Skolia*, a hymn to Athena and another to Demeter and her daughter, Persephone:

Pallas, Triton-born, Queen Athena,  
uphold this city and its citizens,  
free from pains and strifes  
and untimely deaths – you and your father.  
(no. 884)

I sing of the mother of Wealth, Olympian Demeter,  
in the garland-wearing season,

<sup>81</sup> In Book 8 of the *Odyssey*, at King Alkinoos’ banquet in Phaiakia, Odysseus pours repeated libations to “the gods,” apparently in appreciation of their protection, which has helped him survive the Trojan War. For the existence of a religious system common to all Greeks, see Cartledge (1985) and Price (1999, introduction).

<sup>82</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (2000a: 18). In an earlier essay, Sourvinou-Inwood (1978: 101) advances the assumption that “before the emergence in the eighth century BCE of the agents of Panhellenic religion, the Panhellenic sanctuaries and literature such as the Homeric poems, there were significant differences in divine personalities and the composition of the panthea in the different cities.” Mikalson (2004) suggests that Greek religion as seen in Homer and Hesiod had already been subjected to “considerable patterning” in a process of pan-Hellenization (p. 210), and he notes that geographical diversity continued to exist in later Greek religion in the specific deities worshipped, the deities’ functions, and the rituals of the worship (pp. 214–215). Also see Schachter (2000) on the mixture of underlying unity with regional variations in Greek religion.

and of you, Persephone, child of Zeus:  
 Greetings, both! Tend this city well.<sup>83</sup>  
 (no. 885)

According to Plutarch (46–120 CE), songs like the preceding ones may have been created for collective performance by all the guests, usually at the beginning and end of a banquet; the musically better-equipped guests would perform more sophisticated pieces for and on behalf of the company.<sup>84</sup> A longer piece, such as *Theognidea* 757–768, may have belonged to the latter circumstance:

May Zeus that dwells in the sky ever extend his right arm  
 over this city for her safety's sake,  
 and with him the other Blessed Immortals.  
 May Apollo set straight both our tongue and our wits,  
 and may harp and pipe sound holy music,  
 and let us conciliate the Gods with a libation,  
 and drink in pleasant converse with each other,  
 fearing not the war of the Medes.  
 It would be better thus, spending our days in jolly revelry,  
 of one accord and away from cares,  
 and to keep far from those evil Spirits,  
 baleful old age and the end that is Death.

Apollo appears as a proper object of the entreaty in this poem not only because he was a major deity and the god of music but also because he was the patron god of Megara, the city identified with Theognis.<sup>85</sup> Lines 773–782 of the *Theognidea* open with a prayer to Apollo in his capacity as Megara's patron deity and close with an appeal to Apollo that he "be gracious and guard this city of ours."<sup>86</sup> The special significance

<sup>83</sup> *Attic Skolia* nos. 884, 885. Further literary evidence for the essential formal unity of the Greeks' expressions of piety to their common gods may be found in the many similarities in imagery, epithets, structure, and rhetoric among the songs in the *Attic Skolia*, the hymns in the *Theognidea*, and the shortest pieces in the Homeric Hymns (a collection that can be dated largely to the seventh and sixth centuries BCE).

<sup>84</sup> Plutarch, *Table-Talk* 1.1.615b–c. Cf. lines 943–944 in Theognis, *Theognidea*, "Here will I stand by the piper's right hand and sing, / when I have made my prayer to the Immortal Gods." See Collins (2004) for a discussion of the various uses of poetry in Greek convivial games.

<sup>85</sup> Most pertinent to our understanding of the relationship between Apollo and festivity is a long passage in *The Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, where the god leads the Muses in offering song and dance at a divine gathering on Mount Olympus.

<sup>86</sup> Theognis, *Theognidea* 773–774: "Lord Apollo, you yourself fenced this city's heights, / to please Alkathoos son of Pelops" (Alkathoos was a great Megarian hero).



of Apollo's presence to Megarian banqueters is indicated by the pious imploring of the god with which the *Theognidea* opens:

O Lord, Son of Leto, Offspring of Zeus,  
neither beginning will I forget you nor ending,  
but sing of you always first, last, and in between.  
But you give ear to me and grant me good.

(lines 1–4)

When symposiasts get together, expression of piety to their common gods is a requisite, and divine blessings for their civic commonwealth are among the greatest “goods” (*esthla*) that they wish to obtain on an occasion that celebrates male homosocial bonding. Friendships and civic fellowship constitute a continuum when the state is coterminous with the collective of male citizens.<sup>87</sup> Both kinds of bonding flourish only under the auspices of the gods.

The idea that gods are the ultimate source of everything that humans possess, from material welfare to interpersonal bonds to intellectual creativity, finds sophisticated expression in the two convivial dialogues by Plato and Xenophon. According to both narrators, after dinner the guests pour a libation, sing a hymn, and then proceed to a drinking session that features conversation and musical entertainment (Pl. *Symp.* 176a; Xen. *Symp.* 2.1). We are not told to which gods the guests address their hymns, but it is significant that both Plato and Xenophon conceive of the evening's subsequent philosophical program as a continuation of the act of praising the divine. In Plato's account, Eryximakhos, who takes it upon himself to propose the theme of the evening's discussion, begins by noting the curious fact that whereas other gods have hymns and paeans in their honor, no poet has ever composed a song of praise for Eros, an ancient and great god. It is then moved that the banqueters attempt to redress this injustice by each offering a fitting hymn to the neglected god (Pl. *Symp.* 177a–d). With the approval of this motion, the guests take turns eulogizing Eros, vying with one another in rhetorical ingenuity. These hymns form the bulk of Plato's convivial dialogue.

Though employing the same dialogical device as Plato, Xenophon is satisfied to give only one eulogy to Eros (Xen. *Symp.* 8.1–41), the speech reserved for Socrates. Its length, its climactic position, and the impact it exerts on the audience, however, leave no doubt that the author

<sup>87</sup> As Aristotle remarks in his *Nikomachean Ethics* (1155a23–24), the friendship (*philia*) among the citizens functioned as the bond of the state.

means it to be understood as the intellectual centerpiece of the evening. Xenophon's Socrates likewise launches his eulogy by pointing out how an ancient, mighty, and all-encompassing god has been unjustly neglected (Xen. *Symp.* 8.1). It is in behalf of all those who worship the god (*tou theou toutou thiasōtai*) that Socrates feels obliged to deliver a passionate tribute to Eros. Here, as well as in Plato's dialogue, the philosophizing on and endorsement of male love, albeit conveyed in lengthy and discursive prose, are designated a hymn and attempt to appropriate the authority of that traditional sacred genre. In both portrayals, the city as an ideal community is constituted by all the votaries of Eros, with their fellowship sealed under the sign of the god and with the god as the guardian of the creative energy that grows out of intense peer competition.

*Festivals: Individuals and the City*

Religious festivals, which typically included athletic and musical contests, form the backdrop for many of the sympotic occasions discussed so far in this chapter. For example, Odysseus' vengeance against the suitors takes place during the festival of Apollo, which is also the event celebrated in lines 773–782 of the *Theognidea*. Xenophon's *Symposium* purports to be memories of a banquet that Kallias held to celebrate his boy beloved's athletic victory at the Panathenaia in 421 BCE. Moreover, the occasion for the gathering in Plato's *Symposium* is the playwright Agathon's first victory in drama competition, in 416 BCE, at the Lenaean festival.

The prominence of the highly competitive festivals in the selected texts is by no means a coincidence. As Walter Burkert points out, "The living religious practice of the Greeks is concentrated on the festivals." The same scholar, noting that the religious function of the Greek festivals was in danger of being lost in their competitive events, makes sense of it by invoking the Greek fondness for contests of all sorts: "All are well convinced that the gods, like men, take a delighted interest in the contest."<sup>88</sup>

Individual achievement was exalted in the athletic contests at the festivals. In the first quarter of the sixth century BCE, the four great

<sup>88</sup> Burkert (1985: 225, 103). On pp. 105–106, Burkert marvels at how the Greeks could turn everything into a contest and notes the central role that the sanctuaries played in the management of the festal contests. Robert Parker (1986: 264) also comments on the Greeks' lack of concern that the festivals' "worldly gaiety" threatened to displace their religious purport.

pan-Hellenic festivals, Olympic (honoring Zeus), Pythian (honoring Apollo), Isthmian (honoring Poseidon), and Nemean (honoring Zeus), were organized into an interlocking circuit.<sup>89</sup> The high prestige these festivals enjoyed and the great excitement they caused throughout the Greek world show that the relentless pursuit of individual excellence as represented by the Homeric aristocratic warrior hardly died out but found new expression in athletics in the late Archaic and the classical periods. In fact, the Greeks believed that all of the great pan-Hellenic games had their origins in the funeral games that Achilles holds for Patroklos in the *Iliad*.<sup>90</sup> While the citizen-hoplites who fought in a closely formed phalanx were the heroic warriors of the new age, the aristocrats and their ethos still reigned at the athletic festivals. The demand for leisure and resources resulted in dominance by the nobility and the well-to-do, especially in the equestrian events (where jockeys and drivers were hired to do the actual riding and driving). The flaunting of wealth and extolling of individual merit in the celebration of athletic victories were seriously at odds with democratic ideology.<sup>91</sup>

Victory odes (*epinikia*), which are songs performed to honor competition winners, best represent the unstinting affirmation of individual excellence and an enthusiastic commitment to striving for distinction in the context of the agonistic festivals. For example, Pindar's *Olympian* 13 honors Xenophon of Corinth for winning both the stadion race and the pentathlon at the Olympic games in 464 BCE, a feat that the poet celebrates as something "no mortal man ever did before" (*Ol.* 13.31–32). Likewise, Bakkhylides 4 compliments Hieron for being "the only mortal" who has been crowned at the Pythian games for a third time, besides his having had two previous Olympic victories. Also, in Bakkhylides 8, written for an athlete who won thrice at the Isthmos and once at Nemea, the poet eagerly testifies that "no one among the Greeks, / as boy or as man, / won more victories / in equal time" (Bakk. 8.22–25).

Though only a small elite could lay claim to spectacular accomplishments like these, every winner memorialized by the epinikian poets was extraordinary enough to set himself apart from the common crowd

<sup>89</sup> The four great festivals were staggered to produce a continuous succession of games. See Scanlon (2002: 29) for estimates of the number of athletic festivals recorded in Greek sources.

<sup>90</sup> Scanlon (2002: 28).

<sup>91</sup> Pritchard (2003) analyzes the socioeconomic and cultural reasons why under Greek democracy athletics remained an exclusive pursuit of upper-class families. See Golden (1998: 169–175) on the antipathy aroused by equestrian competition in democratic Athens.

and, inevitably, to invite jealousy and resentment. While repeatedly lamenting the undesirable consequences, the poets unflinchingly promote the distinctiveness exemplified by the aristocratic champions, whose athletic victories round out and elevate their general excellences. Bakkhylides 10, for a winner of the footraces in the Isthmian games, pronounces, "This is the finest thing: to be / a noble man much envied by many" (Bakk. 10.47–48). In an ode celebrating an Olympic chariot race victory by Hieron, the ruler of Syracuse, Bakkhylides declares that "anyone who does not fatten himself on envy" should praise this "horse-loving warrior" with his many military victories, who is also a ruler noted for his piety, hospitality, and love of the arts (Bakk. 3.67–71). Hieron is also praised in Pindar's *Olympian* 1, written to commemorate the ruler's Olympic victory in the single-horse race in 476 BCE. The poet makes generous use of the superlative in singing Hieron's eulogy, "He culls the summits of all achievements / and is also glorified / in the finest songs" (*Ol.* 1.13–15).<sup>92</sup>

The pursuit of individual distinction and success by musicians, athletes, and poets at the Greek festivals, while a striking feature of those exciting events, was certainly not all that the events were about. Instead, the festivals were communal occasions that performed important civic functions at various levels, from a city district to the entire city to a confederation of cities to the entire Hellenic world. For example, the Panathenaia ("All-Athenian Festival"), Athens' most important festival, celebrated Athena as the patron goddess of a splendid city. Although resident aliens, representatives of other cities, and even freed slaves played restricted roles in the Panathenaic procession,<sup>93</sup> the festival first and foremost highlighted the unity of the Athenians as a political body. It is perhaps fitting that Harmodios and Aristogeiton carried out the assassination for which they earned the title saviors of the city at the Panathenaia. In the context of this civic festival par excellence, an act motivated by male love took on political significance as well as exemplified the close bonds of the community.<sup>94</sup> A good example of the civic

<sup>92</sup> Hieron lacked neither athletic victories nor celebration by the two great poets of the epinikian genre. Aside from *Olympian* 1 and Bakkhylides 3, Pindar's *Pythian* 1, *Pythian* 2, and *Pythian* 3 and Bakkhylides 4 and 5 were also dedicated to Hieron. Lefkowitz (1976) provides a detailed study of these odes except for Bakkhylides 4, a short piece.

<sup>93</sup> See Maurizio (1998), R. Parker (1996: 91), Philips (2003), and Stevenson (2003) on the political, civic, and religious nature of the Panathenaia's inclusiveness.

<sup>94</sup> Philips (2003: 206–208) comments on the symbolism of the Panathenaia as the occasion for the act of Harmodios and Aristogeiton.

and political significance of the festivals at the pan-Hellenic level may be found at the Pythian games in Delphi. There, barbarians (i.e., non-Greeks) were excluded from competing, and, among the Greeks, the Delphians and members of the Delphic League enjoyed symbolic privileges in the games' administration.<sup>95</sup> Citizenship was key in these games just as in the Panathenaia and other festivals; it determined contestants' eligibility for participation, extent of participation, and order of participation, all of which implied not only civic privileges but also the distinction of Greekness.<sup>96</sup> Thus to understand the enthusiastic pursuit of individual excellence at the Greek festivals, we must consider it in light of the civic nature of those occasions.

One way to conduct this investigation is to study the choruses active at the festivals. It is well known that the choruses, that is, the groups of selected members of the community (organized by age and gender) who sang and danced, had a conspicuous and crucial role at the festivals. According to one scholar, "to celebrate a festival is to set up choruses," and another scholar identifies choral performance and athletic competition as the two essential forms of worship at Greek festivals.<sup>97</sup> Two facts about them make choruses particularly useful for illustrating the relationship between the individual and the communal in Greek religion.

First, insofar as it consisted of representative community members and required the commitment of considerable communal resources for training, a chorus constituted "the sign of a communal religion" and "a formal communalization of ritual experience by and for the community"; thus, its success bore directly on the honor and well-being of the community.<sup>98</sup> The critical word in these characterizations of the chorus, "community," took on different connotations as the advent of democracy in the late sixth and early fifth centuries BCE greatly enlarged the base of participation in the public festivals. "Those who danced [in choruses] were also those in power": in contrast to the essentially

<sup>95</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (2000a: 16–17).

<sup>96</sup> The loss of citizen rights as a punishment for certain crimes or transgressions could mean debarment from participation in the festivals (Sourvinou-Inwood 2000a: 14–15). The Greeks were proud of their extreme fondness for competitive sports, in contradistinction to the barbarians. Gymnasia and athletic festivals were emblematic of the Hellenic lifestyle that was spread by the conquests and cultural exchanges of the Hellenistic and Roman eras (Hornblower 1991: 275–276; Scanlon 2002, ch. 2; Shipley 2000: 86–87).

<sup>97</sup> Burkert (1985: 102); R. Parker (1986: 264).

<sup>98</sup> The quotes are from Kowalzig (2004: 55) and Nagy (1990: 142). For a detailed study of the Athenian institution of the *khoregia*, which sponsored the choruses that competed at the dramatic festivals, see P. Wilson (2003).

aristocratic character of the Archaic chorus, the democratic age saw choruses with much expanded participation, and, on occasion, we can even speak of an equivalence between the festival community and the civic community.<sup>99</sup> If democracy did increase choral participation and put new emphasis on communal rather than on individual excellence by spotlighting the choral contests at festivals,<sup>100</sup> the communal ideal represented by choral performance and its significance for social cohesion never changed. Though comprising different sections of the citizen body at different times, the chorus always sang and danced for the gods as the representatives of their community.<sup>101</sup>

Second, the organization of chorus members according to gender and age and the amount of time that the members had to spend together in rehearsal encouraged the formation of strong extrafamilial homosocial ties. For example, in classical Athens, the dithyrambic choruses at the City Dionysia, an Athenian festival in honor of Dionysus, had two categories, men's dithyramb and boys' dithyramb; each had ten teams (fifty on a team), whose members represented diverse regions of the city. As has been noted, the extended period of training helped the boys develop a sense of solidarity and constituted "a vital act of early political or pre-political participation," and the men's choruses, from their composition to the contents of their songs and dances, evoked the civic duties of adult male citizens in the military and on the democratic council.<sup>102</sup> The

<sup>99</sup> See Jameson (1998) on expanded participation in public religious life in democratic Athens. Kowalzig (2004), the author of the quote (p. 64), argues that the move from elite chorus to citizen chorus in Athens must be understood in terms of the political change in the fifth century BCE.

<sup>100</sup> Musical competitions for individuals had existed since at least the seventh century BCE. Most famously, Hesiod (*Works and Days* 654–659, *Theogony* 22–34) lauds his own victory in a musical contest at Khalkis. Hesiod dedicates his prize (an eared tripod) to the Muses, who, he claims, taught him the mastery of song. The "Hymn to Aphrodite" closes with a plea to the goddess, "grant me victory in this contest, ready my song." Peter Wilson (2003: 167, 182) tentatively suggests that, in Athens, formal, prize-offering contests between choruses first appeared when the festivals were reorganized as part of the project to create a democratic social order and a new civic ideology in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. However, it is clear that with or without formal prizes choral events were always highly competitive collective activities throughout the Greek world.

<sup>101</sup> Kowalzig (2004: 41–43). Folch (2006: 277), analyzing the role of the choruses in Plato's *Laws*, states that for Plato the training in song and dance "becomes a rehearsal of citizenship."

<sup>102</sup> P. Wilson (2003: 168–169). Also see Golden (1990: 67) and Strauss (1993: 91). Folch (2006: 243), commenting on the musical program for children that Plato prescribes in his philosophical works, states that the age specificity of the choruses "indicates that training for and performance of dances and processions serve not only as

competitiveness of choral activity and a chorus's need for its members to cooperate made the chorus a key Greek institution, besides the military, for simultaneously promoting rivalry and camaraderie. According to Peter Wilson, who wrote on the dithyrambic chorus, participation in the chorus "stand[s] readily beside participation in the ranks of the city's army as a means for actively instantiating citizenship, and for expressing solidarity as citizens."<sup>103</sup>

The ubiquitous and beloved festival choruses embodied a combination of the agonistic and the collective spirit rooted in the idea of citizenship. As such, they provide a good reference point for understanding the celebration of individual excellence at Greek festivals epitomized by the victory odes. On the one hand, as Mark Golden points out, athletic pursuits exalted qualities that were "essentially unchanged from those narrated in the great heroic epics" and "recalled and reinforced an aristocratic milieu far from the cooperation and group solidarity required to fight in a hoplite battle line, row a trireme or serve on a democratic board or council."<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, the victory songs exhibit a conscious attempt to respond to what has been called a civic critique of athletes and their honors.<sup>105</sup> As we shall see, the athletic victories were construed as honors as much for the winners' cities as for the winners themselves and their households, a point that the epinikian poets dutifully and painstakingly convey in their eulogies of the champions. In a variety of ways it is so contrived that the city shares the spotlight with the victor and receives tribute for the success of its native sons.

A passage in *Olympian* 9, which Pindar composed for Epharmostos of Opous, whose Olympic victory in wrestling in 468 BCE made him a winner in all four major contests, illustrates the directness and simplicity with which the poet can fulfill his goal to contextualize his patron's accomplishments:

Praise the son (Epharmostos) and his city,  
which Themis and her glorious daughter, saving Order,

military preparation or religious expression, but also as a form of social initiation." In his comprehensive study of the morphology of the Greek chorus, Calame (2001, esp. pp. 26–30) identifies the contemporaneity of its members as one of a chorus's most important features and examines the social and psychological implications of the age-specific character of choral activity. In Chapter 3, I will discuss choruses for young women, especially those groups immortalized in the choral lyrics of the seventh-century BCE Spartan poet Alkman.

<sup>103</sup> P. Wilson (2003: 169, 183–184).

<sup>104</sup> Golden (1998: 161–162).

<sup>105</sup> Golden (1998: 162–163) discusses this critique.

have as their allotment. It flourishes with achievements  
 by your stream, Kastalia,  
 and that of Alpheos;  
 the choicest of crowns won there exalt  
 the Lokrians' famous mother city with its splendid trees.<sup>106</sup>

Such praise is not merely obligatory. In the next lines (*Ol.* 9.14–20), Pindar makes clear his wish for the ode to “light up that dear city” with his “blazing songs,” by proclaiming the victory everywhere (*Ol.* 9.21–25). The city of Opous, blessed by the gods out of the hundreds of city-states in Hellas (note the references to the goddesses Themis and Order in *Ol.* 9), provides the larger framework for the celebration of Epharmostos’ athletic victories.

The prominent position of the city in epinikian rhetoric is also reflected in a major feature of the genre, namely, the insertion of mythical narratives, typically in the middle section of an ode, about historical and legendary heroes connected with the victor’s city. The generous space set aside for recounting the exploits of the city’s heroes (sometimes even starting a myth in the middle of the poem and sustaining it to the end, as in *Nemean* 1 and 10) is an excellent indicator of the poet’s desire to reconcile individual achievement with civic ideology.<sup>107</sup> In *Nemean* 4, for Timasarkhos of Aigina, Pindar endeavors to observe the epinikian imperative to keep the city in the spotlight in the ode’s praise of individual excellence. Thirty-five lines into the poem, after the customary placations, the announcement of the basic facts about the victory, and a brief mythical narrative, the poet seems ready to finally praise the winner but abruptly pulls back, saying that he must resist the temptation to do so until he has offered just praise of the local heroes called the Aiakidai. The descendants of Aiakos (a son of Zeus and Aigina, the eponymous ancestress of the island from which the victor hailed), the Aiakidai include Achilles and appear in every one of the eleven odes Pindar composed for the Aiginetan victors. In *Nemean* 4, Pindar varies the standard presentation of the Aiakidai by pointing out that only someone who excels in the epinikian art (such as himself) knows how to honor the hero-founders in local myths. Inferior eulogists, by contrast,

<sup>106</sup> Themis is the goddess of law and justice. Kastalia is a spring at Delphi, and Alpheos is a river that flows past Olympia. Opous was a city of the Eastern Lokrians. An Olympic victory was considered the most prestigious of all athletic victories, hence the reference to “the choicest of crowns.”

<sup>107</sup> Kurke (1991: 197–203) discusses, along the same lines, the function of the myths and of the praises for the victor’s homeland.



are overeager to praise the victor and thereby slight the heroes. In the hands of the knowing and pious encomiast Pindar, the common heritage of the civic community, represented by its gods and heroes, will not be eclipsed by extraordinary individuals.

The attempt to reconcile an affirmation of individual achievement with the celebration of the city is easier to understand in light of the traditional view that epinikian poetry was performed by a chorus of citizens (commissioned by the victor or by his family in the case of a minor) at the homecoming celebration held in the victor's hometown.<sup>108</sup> The end of Pindar's *Nemean* 2 may well refer to such a scenario:

Celebrate him [Zeus, patron deity of the Nemean games], O citizens,  
in honor of Timodemos upon his glorious return,  
and lead off with a sweetly melodious voice.

(*Nem.* 2.23–25)

Bakkhylides may also be pointing to the public context of a homecoming reception in an ode celebrating the winner of boys' wrestling at the Pythian games:

It is thanks to you [goddess of Victory] that Metapontion,  
the god-honored city, is now filled with  
the celebrations and festivities  
of strong-limbed youths, and they sing  
The praises of the Pythian victor,  
The marvelous son of Phaiskos.

(Bakk. 11.9–14)

If passages like these are indeed self-reflexive (i.e., invoke the actual performance context of the odes themselves), they accomplish the double task of exalting individual competitiveness and excellence and of reining it in by a civic institution that exemplifies a combination of the agonistic and the collective spirit. Representing the city in welcoming home the returning victor, the chorus seeks to convey two messages: that the athlete is the best, and that the athlete is a worthy member of the community insofar as he is the best. The latter point finds an interesting illustration in Pindar's ode for Aristokleidas of Aigina, the winner

<sup>108</sup> Heath and Lefkowitz (1991) challenge this traditional view. See, however, the chorus hypothesis presented by Burnett (1989) and Carey (1991). I agree with Burnett, Carey, and other Pindar scholars such as Kurke (1991: 5) and Nagy (1990: 142–143).

at Nemea in the grueling event known as the pankration. The poet addresses the Muse:

It will be a joyous task to glorify  
this land, where the Myrmidons [Achilles' people] of old  
dwelled, whose long-famed assembly place  
Aristokleidas did not stain with dishonor,  
thanks to your favor, by weakening in the mighty  
course of the pankration.

(*Nem.* 3.12–17)

Formulated in a negative way (winning equals not dishonoring one's glorious land), the victory becomes a civic triumph that the athlete brings home and dedicates to his native city.<sup>109</sup> Allaying the envy that the victor's fellow citizens may feel toward him and making them share in his honor, the victory ode fulfills its function to reintegrate the athletic hero into the civic community. The same goal also motivates the poet to take pains to dispel any suspicion that the victor, an individual of noble birth and distinguished abilities, might harbor transgressive ambitions against the civic community (the establishment of tyranny being a constant fear).<sup>110</sup> It is widely recognized that the institutionalization and reorganization of the local as well as of the pan-Hellenic festivals in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE aimed at promoting corporate competition and collective civic identity while controlling individual ambition.<sup>111</sup> If the choral contests fulfilled that function more straightforwardly, epinikian poetry, in its attempt to juggle the assertion of the athletic victor's merits and the exaltation of the city's greatness, brings out the tension within the civic community.

*Festivals: The Individual, the Family, and the City*

In the aristocratic ethos underlying Greek athletic contests, the pursuit of individual excellence is embedded in the belief in inborn talent and in the effort to perpetuate family traditions. In victory odes, the athlete's family receives a fair share of the praise extended to the hero, and this is true not only of those poems commissioned by the parents of the boy athletes (adult athletes usually made their own commissions). Thus

<sup>109</sup> There were historical instances in which the victor dedicated his crown to his city upon his return (Kurke 1991: 206).

<sup>110</sup> See Kurke (1991: 209ff.) for examples. On pp. 214–218, Kurke offers an extensive discussion of *Pyth.* 11 as an emphatic statement rejecting tyranny.

<sup>111</sup> Osborne (1993: 34–37); Philips (2003).

athletic festivals became a site for mediating relationships among the individual, the family, and the city.

Besides a homecoming welcome from his native city, a victorious athlete was also greeted by a family celebration. *Isthmian* 8, one of Pindar's eleven songs composed for the boy champions from Aigina, opens with an imminent household celebration. The poet addresses the local youths at the city's welcoming reception:

In honor of youthful Kleandros, let one of you go,  
O young men, to the splendid portal  
of his father Telesarkhos  
to awaken the revel, as a glorious requital  
for his efforts and a reward  
both for his Isthmian victory and because at Nemea  
he gained triumph in the contests.

(*Isth.* 8.1–5)

Most, if not all, of the families that produced the victors at the games had aristocratic backgrounds, and only such families could afford the costs of commissioning a victory ode and throwing a celebratory banquet as envisioned in the preceding poem. These expenses were simply part of the tremendous resources required by the whole enterprise of pursuing athletic excellence.<sup>112</sup> As a result, such successes were often concentrated in certain families, and the epinikian poets, in their enthusiastic endorsement of hereditary talent, delighted in placing each victory within the context of the family's previous athletic achievements.

Often the poets employed a victory catalog, which consisted of an enumeration of the triumphs of other family members besides the victor being commemorated. For example, *Olympian* 13 contains two catalogs of the most impressive athletic accomplishments of the family of Xenophon (of Corinth, not the Athenian). Xenophon won both the stadion race and the pentathlon at Olympia on the same day, but his father also was an Olympic champion, having won in footracing; five members of the family (Xenophon, his father, a grandfather, a granduncle, and an uncle or cousin) shared sixty crowns at Nemea and the Isthmos alone. If these records are any indication of the family's glory, the poet declares, it is impossible to give a complete account, "for truly I would not know how to state a clear number for the pebbles of the sea" (*Ol.* 13.45–46). Another example may be found in *Nemean* 6, which

<sup>112</sup> Nicholson (2005); Pritchard (2003).

honors Alkimidas of Aigina for his victory in boys' wrestling but also gives a prominent place to the remarkable athletic success of five generations of Alkimidas' family: twenty-five crowns from the four major games. As Anne Burnett points out, the burden of celebrating the past in this case was such that "the newly crowned lad, Alkimidas, shrinks to a little more than a statistic when the singers proclaim the astounding total."<sup>113</sup>

With Leslie Kurke, who has made a strong case against the usual focus on the heroic individual in Pindar criticism, I believe that the epinikian emphasis on family athletic traditions shows that the victors are not "completely free agents" but "rather the representatives of a corporate body that requires their achievement."<sup>114</sup> What, then, are the relationships among the individual, the family, and the city in the victory ode? How does the importance of the family in epinikian ideology fit with the embrace of extrafamilial homosocial bonding – and its component egalitarianism, competitiveness, and solidarity – in Archaic and classical Greek discourses of sociability? Should we interpret the exaltation of the individual and the family in the epinikian genre as "a kind of counterrevolution on the part of the aristocracy" in the late Archaic and early classical periods?<sup>115</sup> I have two points to make.

First, the importance given to the victor's household in epinikian poetry does not imply the subordination of the individual to the family as much as it emphasizes the "continuity of challenge and effort" best demonstrated in the familial pursuit of athletic success.<sup>116</sup> In his analysis of the Pindaric motif of the victor's return home, Kevin Crotty uses this phrase to characterize the meaning of "home" for those athletes who must leave their homes to compete. As Crotty puts it, home is the place from which an athlete must depart and to which he must return, and the quest of an individual competitor or of a household for ever more

<sup>113</sup> Burnett (2005: 157). For other examples of a victory catalog, see Kurke (1991: 20n14). Kurke counts 37 passages in Pindar that name other victorious family members along with the victor and 28 in which the victor stands alone.

<sup>114</sup> Kurke (1991: 23). Cynthia Patterson (1998: 242n18), who argues that no corporate kin groups existed in Archaic and classical Greece (see Introduction), criticizes Kurke for assuming a patrilineal kin group–based social structure in her discussion of family and kinship in Pindar's poetry. I think Kurke's statement holds if we understand the "corporate body" not as a kinship organization bound by common property and religious rites but in terms of a sense of belonging to a family tradition.

<sup>115</sup> Kurke (1991: 258–259).

<sup>116</sup> The quoted phrase is from Kevin Crotty (1982: 137). The context of his analysis will be discussed presently.

athletic success means that each victorious return “is not conclusive but simply a phase in an ongoing story of challenge, victory, and defeat.”<sup>117</sup>

Pindar’s wariness about the security of home finds strong expression in *Pythian* 4, which celebrates Arkesilas of Kyrene’s victory in a chariot race in 462 BCE. By far the longest of Pindar’s odes, *Pythian* 4 includes an extended mythical narrative about the Argonauts (the young warriors who sailed with Jason on his quest for the golden fleece) because the family of Arkesilas, who was ruler of Kyrene, claimed one of the Argonauts as their ancestor. Relating how Hera inspired many heroes to join Jason’s expedition, the poet states that the goddess’ intent was “so that no one might be left behind / to remain with his mother and coddle a life / without risk, but rather, even if it meant death, to gain the most noble remedy for his own achievement / in the company of others of his age” (*halixin sun allois*, *Pyth.* 4.185–188). In these lines, the home is unfavorably presented as an obstruction to a young warrior’s growth and chance at winning fame; its debilitating effect is epitomized by the stereotypical coddling mother. Only by leaving his mother and joining the company of “others of his age” (his “age-mates”) on a quest for adventure can a young man come into his own and bring fame to himself, his family, and his ancestors. To stay at home will deprive him of the challenge, stimulation, and support offered by his cohort and thus of the opportunity to establish himself and prove himself to be a worthy descendant of his glorious ancestors.<sup>118</sup>

It is impossible to miss the importance attached to socialization among one’s “age-mates” in the Greek tradition. The *Odyssey*, which includes among its parallel plots a *Bildungsroman* of Telemakhos, offers an early, authoritative example in its depiction of the coming-of-age of Odysseus’ adolescent son. In the first few books of the epic, Telemakhos is a frustrated and confused youth, resentful toward the predatory suitors in his house and his apparently indecisive and flirtatious mother, unsure about his relationship with the heroic king whom he has never met but whom people say is his father, and angry with himself for his inability to clear up the mess and restore order in the house. Under the tutelage of Athena, Telemakhos embarks on a quest for his identity, which begins with a literal journey that he makes across the seas in the company of a group of age-mates (*homēlikīē*) who follow him because of friendship (*philotēti*) to search for news of his father (*Od.* 3.363–364).

<sup>117</sup> Crotty (1982: 137).

<sup>118</sup> Crotty (1982: 119–120).

In undertaking this journey, Telemakhos does what an aspiring noble youth should do according to Pindar's *Pythian* 4, which is seek glory by leaving his mother and embracing the risks of the outside world with his age-mates. At the end of his journey, Telemakhos has become independent of his mother and ready to enter the adult male world represented by his father. It is only now that he can go back home ready to take up arms against the suitors and to fight by the side of his returning father.<sup>119</sup> Experience among one's peers in the extrafamilial realm, and dismissal of the influence of the mother (the figure most frequently associated with home): these hold the key to the making of a successful citizen who is also the master of his household.<sup>120</sup>

Festivals provide a good indication of the high value placed on age-mate experience in Greek society. As already noted, the choruses were formed from members of the same age-grade.<sup>121</sup> Moreover, various rites of an initiatory and often a competitive nature were conducted according to age groups, as were the athletic contests themselves. A division into contests for boys (roughly 12–15 years old), youths (15–18), and adults was followed at Nemea and the Isthmos, whereas the Olympic and Pythian games omitted the middle group in certain events.<sup>122</sup> It is likely that the choruses that performed the victory odes were composed of men and boys in the same age-class as the victor being honored, including some who had regularly exercised with him or had competed against him on other occasions. Pindar refers to the celebrants at the homecoming reception variously as men (*andres*), young men (*neoi*), or boys (*paides*). This demographic composition of the celebrants enriches our understanding of the epinikian mission to reintegrate the victor into his community: he is welcomed back, confirmed, and exalted not only as an outstanding citizen and family member but also as a distinguished representative of his age-mates. Returning with glory to the fold of the group who are at once his rivals and his comrades, the victor

<sup>119</sup> In her analysis of Telemakhos' maturation process, Felson (1994, ch. 4) identifies a radical detachment from his mother as the first stage.

<sup>120</sup> The dynamics of the Greek mother-son relationship will be further discussed in Chapter 4, in comparison with the Chinese case.

<sup>121</sup> Davidson (2007: 75), who provides an illuminating discussion of the Greek age-class system, compares the Greek age-grade to the concept of "class" as in Class of 1968, Class of 2000, etc. All those in the same class and the same age-grade are assumed to be about the same age.

<sup>122</sup> Golden (1998: 104–105). The class of boys sometimes contained more groupings. Scanlon (2002: 68) believes that age-classes may have been part of Greek social organization before the eighth century BCE and that they later found expression in pederasty and athletic contests.

renders a tribute to the nourishing role of his group, yet he also stands as an object of emulation who inspires a desire among his peers for more success, which leads to more competition among them.

*Nemean* 3, for Aristokleidas of Aigina, illustrates the intragroup dynamic of an epinikian celebration by the victor's contemporaries. In the opening strophe, the poet takes us to Aigina, beside the waters of the river Asopos, where "young craftsmen of sweetly sung revels await, mad for a signal from [the Muse]" (*Nem.* 3.4–5; tr. Burnett 2005: 138). Such eagerness is appropriate for youths who can call the returning hero their comrade and friend. Past scattered praise of Aristokleidas and the expected mythical narrative about the prowess of the Aiakidai, the last quarter of the ode lauds Aristokleidas as a victor whose accomplishment adds fame to his city; this acclaim is matched by "wild shouts" at the celebration. The "shouts" apparently refer to the lines that immediately follow, pronounced by Aristokleidas' celebrating friends: "Perfection appears in mid-trial; / where one is meant for pre-eminence, child prevails over child, man among men / and elder is first with the old (*Nem.* 3.70–73; tr. Burnett 2005: 140). These assertions "suggest that a glimpse of ultimate excellence comes only during contest – contest held among peers in the exercise of powers and virtues proper to each age-group."<sup>123</sup> It is fitting that the victor's young friends utter those lines because they are not only his companions and supporters but also his rivals and challengers. Their competition strengthens and enriches their friendship, and their friendship gives purpose and grace to their competition. The rivalry for preeminence is a lasting one, as the person moves through the stages of child, adult, and elder, and a community comprised of perpetually competing individuals will cohere and thrive when the competition involves everyone and takes place within confines set not only by human rules but also, ultimately, by inviolable and often inscrutable divine will.

This takes us to the second point I would like to make. The pan-Hellenic gods were held to be supernatural beings that governed human welfare, from individuals to organizations of individuals,<sup>124</sup> and the relationships among the individual, the family, and the city in epinikian poetry may be understood in terms of the role each of the three units

<sup>123</sup> Burnett (2005: 150).

<sup>124</sup> As Lefkowitz (2003) has argued, this does not mean that the gods care about the welfare of human beings in any constant or coherent manner (in contrast to the Christian conception of divinity). The contrast between human dependence and divine capriciousness solidifies the distance between the two realms of existence.

played in the Greek articulation of religious piety. While the individual was the basic unit in such articulation,<sup>125</sup> the city served as the fundamental unit for collective religious expression, and the family, as a cult unit, provided one among many possible ways (e.g., in accordance with age, sex, and profession) for the grouping of individuals in their expressions of piety.<sup>126</sup> Men, women, boys, and girls formed different subcategories in most of the civic festivals; some festivals were only for men, some only for women, some only for boys, and some only for girls.<sup>127</sup> The contrast between the splendor and energy that emanate from the representations of the festivals and the obscurity enveloping our knowledge about Greek domestic cults may be a measure of the privileged status the Greeks gave to the civic articulation of religious piety.

It is perhaps with the rise of the *polis* in the eighth century BCE that public temples and sanctuaries replaced palaces as centers for religious activities.<sup>128</sup> It can also be argued that Greek civic religion appropriated the religious authority of the family and attempted to represent the city as a suprafamily, with one religious center to which all citizens could come to demonstrate their piety. The functions of the Prytaneion (town hall), a building central to the civic life of the Greek city-state,<sup>129</sup> illustrate this point.

<sup>125</sup> This is because each person could establish a relationship with divinity by engaging in either individual or collective cultic activities, because individual and collective practices were not different in nature, and because individuals were grouped in various ways and according to different classifications when participating in collective cults.

<sup>126</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (2000a, 2000b). Sourvinou-Inwood (2000b: 44) specifically points out that the individual rather than the household constituted the primary unit of Greek *polis* religion.

<sup>127</sup> Dillon (2002); Humphreys (1983: 16). This point is also borne out by van Bremen's discussion (2003: 322, referred to in the Introduction) of the public representation of individuals in Hellenistic civic activities, of which festivals played a vital role. The women's festivals will be discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>128</sup> Ainian (1997); Burkert (1995: 205–207); De Polignac (1995); Morris (1992: 149–154). Morris (1992: 127, 150), who recognizes the sanctuary as a “more communal context,” notes an explosion in sanctuary activity around 700 BCE. That kings' palaces may have been religious centers in an earlier period does not mean that the cults were confined to the aristocracy and only later came to include the other classes. Instead, the aristocrats simply enjoyed the privilege of administering the cults, which were open to all (R. Parker 1996: 23–24).

<sup>129</sup> Miller (1978) offers the most comprehensive study of the Prytaneion, using literary and archaeological evidence that covers several centuries (from the Archaic through the Hellenistic period) and different locations (including Athens, Delos, Lato, and Olympia). As Miller (1978: 66) notes, the Prytaneion predated democracy and may have existed in any Greek city, regardless of the city's form of government.



The Prytaneion housed the public hearth (*koinē hestia*), on which burned the eternal flame that symbolized the life of the city.<sup>130</sup> Two types of activities in keeping with the functions and symbolic significance of the hearth (*hestia*) found in every Greek home were associated with the Prytaneion's public hearth. Just as the domestic hearth represented home life and household hospitality, the Prytaneion, with its public hearth, was where the city could entertain foreign ambassadors and its own distinguished citizens.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, whereas the family hearth was the center of household rituals presided over by the father, the public hearth was the center of a civic religion whose participants were the citizenry. Official sacrifices took place in the Prytaneion, numerous religious processions started from there, priests who directed the festivals or who judged at them held conferences there, and religious oaths were sworn around its hearth.<sup>132</sup> Arguably, in installing a public hearth that imitated and appropriated the functions of the domestic hearth, Greek civic religion aimed to surpass the family's religious authority and define the city as the central site for religious articulation, political allegiance, and social cohesion. The public hearth may have been critical in fostering the sense that the city is a family writ large.<sup>133</sup>

Another example is the cult of Zeus Herkeios (Zeus of the Courtyard). Because Zeus Herkeios was a guardian of the physical space of the household and of the family as a social unit, his cult in Greek households would seem to have been the domestic cult par excellence. However, Zeus Herkeios also had a deme (township) cult and a central *polis* cult, and his household cult was symbolically dependent on and sanctioned by these higher-order cults.<sup>134</sup> The same can be said of the multilayered cult of Zeus Ktesios (Zeus of the Storeroom), who blessed families with material prosperity.<sup>135</sup>

There was a major aspect of family cult activities, however, that was not incorporated into the civic religious system: the tending of ancestral tombs. The acts of piety associating with caring for tombs included

<sup>130</sup> Miller (1978: 13–14).

<sup>131</sup> Miller (1978: 4–13) and Schmitt-Pantel (1992: 148–149) discuss who dined in the town hall and what menu was served.

<sup>132</sup> Miller (1978: 14).

<sup>133</sup> L. Gernet (1981: 322–337), Humphreys (1983: 15), Mikalson (2005: 160–161), R. Parker (1996: 26–27), and Vernant (1983).

<sup>134</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (2000b: 52–53). For evidence on the multilayered cult of Zeus Herkeios, also see Lambert (1993: 215–216).

<sup>135</sup> For more detail on the domestic cults of Zeus Herkeios and Ktesios, see Mikalson (2005: 134–135) and Rose (1957).

pouring libations, washing the stelae, and placing wreaths.<sup>136</sup> Though such memorial rituals tended to be irregular and gradually tapered off,<sup>137</sup> they demonstrate the autonomy that each household enjoyed vis-à-vis the city and other households in preserving its own memories and creating its own legacy. No matter how important it was for the individual citizen to feel a sense of belonging to the “civic family,” and no matter how deeply the civic ideology penetrated into all levels of Greek religious articulation, the natural family always remained a primary social unit for which the individual would and should feel a strong attachment. State efforts to appropriate the religious authority of the family and to regulate the conduct of family rituals testified to the abiding strength of family and kinship ties,<sup>138</sup> and the assertion of such strength generally either had state sanction or assumed the form of negotiation and reconciliation within the civic framework.

As seen in Pindar’s odes, tension existed between the victor’s family and his native city, and a poet who was obligated to praise his patrons’ glorious pedigree took great care not to let the kudos for a family preempt the honors due the city. An example is *Nemean* 2, in which Pindar honors Timodemos from Athens as the champion in the pankration. Calling the victor’s family the foremost in athletic games in a hometown “famous of old for brave men,” Pindar devotes six out of the twenty-five lines in this short ode to enumerating the previous victories in the family: four Pythian crowns, eight Isthmian, seven Nemean, and local ones “too many to count” (*Nem.* 2.19–24). What seems here to be Pindar’s indulgence in parading a family’s accomplishments, however, has a context, which the poet carefully provides near the beginning of the ode, “indeed life, / while guiding him (Timodemos) straight on the path of his fathers, / has given him as an adornment for great Athens” (*tais megalais dedōke kosmon Athanais*, *Nem.* 2.6–8). In this statement, the

<sup>136</sup> Burkert (1985: 193–194), Mikalson (2005: 136–137). The crucial differences between the Greek and Chinese ways of commemorating ancestors will be discussed in Chapter 2.

<sup>137</sup> Antonaccio (1995: 48).

<sup>138</sup> One example concerns the transformation of the funeral games from the Archaic to the classical period. It had been a popular practice in the Archaic period to commemorate one’s dead relatives by holding funeral games in their honor (Roller 1981). In the fifth century BCE, the athletic contests in honor of one’s immediate ancestors gave way to funeral games for civic heroes, who were deceased persons of special numinous power worshipped under the authority of the city (Roller 1981: 5–6; Seaford 1994; Chapter 3). In the opinion of Nagy (1990: 143), “The cult of heroes is historically speaking a transformation of the worship of ancestors on the level of the polis.”

hereditary excellence of a victor is subsumed under the rubric of civic identity that defines both him and his family. In following in his ancestors' footsteps and bringing home athletic glory, the victor is, like the ancestors themselves, winning fame and honor for his native city. It is with this understanding of the relationship among the individual, the family, and the city that the poet concludes his ode with a request to the citizens: "Celebrate him [Zeus], O citizens, / in honor of Timodemos upon his glorious return, / and lead off with a sweetly melodious voice" (*Nem.* 2.23–25). The civic community's endorsement and participation, in addition to the blessings of the gods that oversee the contests and celebrations (on this occasion, Zeus), are needed to make the exaltation of individual and familial excellence meaningful and safe.

The relationship between success for a family and prestige for a city can also be seen in Pindar's *Isthmian* 6, one of three songs that Lampon of Aigina commissioned to honor his victorious sons. Having praised the two "splendid boys" for refreshing their family's record of athletic achievement, Pindar proceeds to commend Lampon for the good training he has given his sons. The poet frames his commendation within a eulogy about the father's hospitality, moderation, and civic-mindedness, all virtues expected of a leading citizen who is sensible that he must not arouse envy. The poet need not reveal the details of Lampon's acts of public munificence, which is a virtue constantly urged on eminent citizens,<sup>139</sup> because in raising two athletic champions the father "brings to his own city an adornment all share" (*xunon astei kosmon heōi prosagōn*, *Isth.* 6.69–70). This is a similar turn of phrase to that used of Timodemos in *Nemean* 2 (quoted earlier). Here as there, it is essential that individual accomplishments and familial success be situated in a civic framework and be construed as contributions that citizens make to their commonwealth.<sup>140</sup>

We should understand the epinikian "counterrevolution" in terms of a relationship of tension, negotiation, and reconciliation between the

<sup>139</sup> The "move away from the display of wealth at home and attraction of a personal following to display of munificence in the city center and contests for political office and political support independent of personal ties" seems to have occurred from about the seventh century BCE onward (Humphreys 1978: 69). Kurke (1991, ch. 7) discusses the virtue of *megaloprepeia* (magnanimity), which carries the obligation to spend vast wealth on honorable public causes such as sacrifices to the gods, producing a chorus or a play, or furnishing a trireme. Peter Wilson (2000) illustrates the ideology of public munificence and how it worked in his study of the sponsorship of dramatic choruses in Athens.

<sup>140</sup> Another example is *Ol.* 13, which opens with praise for Xenophon's family as a house "that is gentle to townsmen and for foreigners an assiduous host" (1–3).

exaltation of distinguished individuals and families, and the upholding of the civic ideology. This understanding was as applicable to Pindar's poetry as it was to the Spartan way of commemorating athletic victories in the late Archaic and classical periods. The Spartiates led a compulsory, public way of life (they lived largely in military training camps with others of their age-grade until age thirty), and all of their activities, including their participation in athletic contests, were subject to stringent official control.<sup>141</sup> In Sparta, the idea of the "family of citizens" found its most literal realization in the mandatory collective life in the training camps. Yet, fundamentally, the Spartans were like other Greeks (including the Athenians, who enjoyed flaunting their "freedoms" before their Peloponnesian neighbors) in the high value that they placed on athletic victories and in the manner in which they chose to commemorate their achievements.<sup>142</sup> There is remarkable similarity between Sparta and other Greek cities in the public honor they conferred on athletic victories, in the types of votive offerings that the cities' victorious athletes dedicated to deities, and in the content of the dedicatory inscriptions. Extant inscriptions include some that celebrate the athletic successes of generations of family members.<sup>143</sup> We may rightfully suspect the existence of competition and tension between the family and state in such instances, but it should be noted that one of the advertisements of athletic victories by a father and his son was inscribed on a stele dedicated to Athena Khalkioikos (the *polis*' guardian deity) on Sparta's acropolis.<sup>144</sup> This intriguing monument suggests that any tension there might be in this very public display of individual and familial excellence was contained and allowed legitimate expression within the civic framework of the Spartan state.

<sup>141</sup> Cartledge (2001).

<sup>142</sup> The discussion in this paragraph is indebted to Hodkinson (1999), who forcefully disproves the conventional view that after the mid-sixth century BCE Sparta diverged from the other Greek states in its attitude toward athletic contests. Despite some local peculiarities (e.g., the significant role of team contests and the apparent restrictions on public commemoration of living Olympic victors), Hodkinson (1999: 177) concludes, "Spartiate society can be said truly to have shared in the agonistic culture which was the common currency of the archaic and classical Greek world."

<sup>143</sup> Hodkinson (1999: 152–153, 173–175).

<sup>144</sup> Hodkinson (1999: 152–153). The inscription in question (dated ca. 440–435 BCE) lists altogether 56 victories won at many festivals by the father, Damonon, and the son, Enymakratidas, in various contests: the chariot race, the horseback race, the stade, the diaulos, the dolichos, and the boys' stade. For a translation of the inscription, see Sweet (1987: 145–146).

The Spartan example sheds light on how we should understand the elevation of family and heritage in Pindar's victory odes. Pindar sometimes represents an athletic victory or an epinikian ode as a funeral libation poured to the victor's ancestors.<sup>145</sup> Yet this does not make him a reactionary skeptic about the prevailing civic ideology or a nostalgic subscriber to aristocratic politics any more than the victory dedication on the Spartan acropolis makes the father and son who had it inscribed. The preceding discussion has demonstrated that, for all we can tell, Pindar takes consistent care to ensure that the city receives its fair share of affirmation and praise as the framework within which the strivings for success by individuals and families take on meaning. At the same time as an athletic victory, in its ability to inspire and rejuvenate, constitutes a libation to the athlete's ancestors, it is also a dedication to the city and to divinity on behalf of the city.<sup>146</sup>

The conspicuous advertisement of family athletic successes on the Spartan acropolis and similar dedications in other Spartan sanctuaries, albeit somewhat surprising, remind us of what should be a plain fact: family and kinship ties and sentiments are "natural," and they find strong expression in all societies, ancient and modern. The difference lies perhaps only in the manner of expression and in their relative roles in social relations in a specific culture. The family heritage commemorated in Greek victory odes and dedicatory inscriptions offers an index to the unquestionable importance of the family in Greek sociable life. This importance, however, must be understood in light of the ever-passionate celebration of extrafamilial homosocial bonds – between comrades, fellow citizens, pederastic partners,<sup>147</sup> and age-mates – that dominates the

<sup>145</sup> Kurke (1991: 64, and ch. 3 passim).

<sup>146</sup> In *Ol.* 9, Epharmostos of Opous, the victor honored in the ode, dedicated his crown at the altar of Aias, a local hero. For historical examples of such dedications, see Kurke (1991: 206).

<sup>147</sup> Pindar was also known in antiquity as a lover of boys. Among his extant works, fragment 128 describes playing a drinking party game in which a player declares his love for a beloved boy. Fragment 123, a drinking song, praises the beauty of the boy Theoxenos in the tradition of pederastic courtship: "One should cull love, my heart, as appropriate during youth, / but whoever has seen those rays / flashing from Theoxenos' eyes / and is not flooded with desire, / has a black heart forged from adamant or steel // with a cold flame, and is dishonored by bright-eyed Aphrodite, / or toils compulsively for money / or with womanly courage / is carried in service to an utterly cold path. / But I, because of her [i.e., Aphrodite], melt like the wax / of holy bees bitten by the sun's heat, whenever I look / upon the new-limbed youth of boys. / So, after all, in Tenedos / Persuasion and Grace dwell / in the son of Hagesilas." Whether the poem represents the poet's personal declaration of love (as is the opinion of Athenaios, who quotes the poem in *Deipnosophists* 13.601) or is

Greek literary tradition. For Archaic and classical athletic champions, as for Homeric warriors, and for all the value they place on family heritage, glory must be won away from home and through competition with peers.<sup>148</sup>

### Conclusion

Association with one's peers, in the capacity of comrades and fellow citizens, is the constant focus of Archaic and classical Greek representations of male sociability. From the epics to the Attic drinking songs, from Alkaios to Pindar, and from the *Theognidea* to the philosophical-convivial dialogues of Plato and Xenophon, poets and philosophers celebrated fellowship in the spirit of rivalry and equality. The advent of democracy maximized the demographic base for participation in competitive and egalitarian fellowship and thus further enhanced the importance of collective activities in the common domain. The relationship of tension, negotiation, and reconciliation between the individual and the family and between the family and the civic community may have found its richest expression in the classical period, but beginning with Homer, extrafamilial male homosocial bonding had been privileged over and against family ties as the most important relationship for the making and testing of great heroes and, ultimately, for the winning of lasting fame. As James Redfield states, "The Greeks generally took the view that only by participating in such a community of competing peers could one become a human being in the full sense."<sup>149</sup> It is at the public festivals and as members of a civic community standing before their common gods that the Greeks fully flourished as the equal and competing individuals they had aspired to be in all sociable contexts from Homer onward. The special usefulness of the religious perspective in understanding the organizing principles of Greek sociability will become more evident when we come to the Chinese case.

instead a work commissioned by the boy's lover, its existence in the epinikian-dominated Pindaric corpus reminds us that the Archaic and classical poets, like their less poetically talented contemporaries, embraced and competed within a complex of extrafamilial homosocial relationships, though they might be most celebrated for their works on only a certain aspect of it. For a study of Pindar's sympotic poetry, see Groningen (1960).

<sup>148</sup> Donlan (2007: 37–39); Kurke (1991: 16, 27).

<sup>149</sup> Redfield (1995: 164).

## China

### *Ancestors, Brothers, and Sons*

The Greek protagonist of the warrior-banqueter-lover type finds a very different counterpart in the Chinese convivial discourse. Even though fighting was a key function of the Zhou aristocracy and festivities were an important vehicle for the expression of social values and the forging of group cohesion,<sup>1</sup> the major material for the Chinese representation of convivial life came from kin gatherings and kinship solidarity. We see a striking contrast between the agonistic spirit and strong extrafamilial male homosocial bonds that predominate in the Greek sources and the preoccupation with domestic harmony and order in the transcribed thoughts and emotions of the Chinese merry-makers.

The analysis of this chapter falls into three major parts. We begin with Chinese religious festivities, including festivals in honor of deities and banquets associated with ancestral sacrifices. Then we move on to banquets celebrating military victories. Finally, we examine how the relationship between kinship and friendship was a serious question in the minds of the Chinese banqueters and how they reasoned about and formulated their answers. Comparisons will be made with Greece throughout the chapter.

Besides using bronze inscriptions, prescriptions for drinking rituals found in the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial (Yili)*,<sup>2</sup> and a few other sources as corroborating evidence, the bulk of the primary material

<sup>1</sup> On the importance of the military function among the Western Zhou elite, see Du Zhengsheng (1979, ch. 2), M. E. Lewis (1990), Yang Kuan (1999: 711–715), and Zhu Fenghan (2004: 239–240, 396–401).

<sup>2</sup> On the rationale for using the bronze inscriptions, see the Introduction. On the basis of an astute examination of the evidence, Shen Wenzhuo (2006) plausibly proposes that the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* might have acquired written form roughly between 450 and 350 BCE.

analyzed in this chapter comes from the *Book of Odes*.<sup>3</sup> This anthology consists of 305 poems in four divisions. It is generally agreed that the poems date between the eleventh and the seventh centuries BCE, with the Hymns (Song) being the earliest section, followed by, in order, the Major Odes (Da ya), the Minor Odes (Xiao ya), and the Airs of the States (Guo feng). The subject matters of the Hymns and the Airs of the States stand clearly apart from each other; the former preserves revered dynastic memories and pertains to solemn liturgical occasions and the latter focuses on courtship and marriage and other quotidian emotions and concerns. The Major and Minor Odes seem to mark transitions between the Hymns and the Airs of the States, addressing both topics of historical and liturgical interest and matters of daily life and having a courtly feel overall.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the chronological distance that separates the earliest and latest strata of the *Odes*, despite the different geographical provenances of the songs, and despite the great diversity in their subject matters, this anthology of largely anonymous poems is noted for its remarkable linguistic homogeneity and “fairly consistent voice.”<sup>5</sup> It is unclear whether, as tradition has it, the Zhou court engaged in the collection and editing of the songs as a way to fathom the sentiments of its people and to assess the successes and failures of its governance.<sup>6</sup> However, the Zhou court is

<sup>3</sup> The title of this collection of poems is also commonly translated as the *Book of Poetry* and the *Book of Songs*. I have chosen to use the *Book of Odes* to emphasize the original performance dimension of the pieces in the anthology, and I will refer to them variously as odes, poems, or songs. For convenience, I will use “*Odes*” (italicized) to refer to the received anthology, and “Odes” (roman) to refer to the evolving corpus of songs that had circulated in oral form before the earliest extant redaction of the received text. Poems in the received anthology will be referred to by their Mao recension number (i.e., Ode 1 through Ode 305).

<sup>4</sup> Nylan (2001, ch. 2) refers to these two sections of the *Odes* as “Court Songs.” Factors that have been invoked to explain the four-part division of the *Odes* include the following: moral outlook (pure or degenerate), social class of the authors (commoners, aristocracy, or court musicians), function (praise or blame), and type and style of performance (musical accompaniment, mode of music). See Lu and Feng (1999: 9–18), Nylan (2001: 87–91), and Zhu Mengting (2005).

<sup>5</sup> Based on linguistic analysis, Dobson (1968) concludes that the language of the poems in all four divisions reveals no dialect differences or social stratification and that the linguistic variations among the divisions reflect only the historical evolution in the Chinese language. He finds that the poems in the Airs of the States, which reputedly originated in the various states across Zhou China, are linguistically homogenous; as the latest group of poems to become part of the anthology, the language of the Airs of the States contrasts as a whole with that of the other three divisions. Nylan (2001: 78) notes the consistency in the voice of the anthology.

<sup>6</sup> See J. R. Allen (1996: 341–342), Lu and Feng (1999: 6–7), Zhang Xitang (1957, ch. 4), Zhou Yanliang (2005, ch. 6), and Zhu Mengting (2005: 57–73) on this tradition.



the most likely institution to have been responsible for putting together the songs from century to century and continuously reworking them into a more or less cohesive corpus. If it is difficult to ascertain the role that the Zhou royal court played in the making of the Odes, there is no question that in the Spring and Autumn period sociable activities at the royal and local courts provided the major venues for the performance of the Odes and for the perpetuation of the cultural legacy associated with such performance.<sup>7</sup> Many centuries before the Odes acquired a stable written form and became one of the Five Classics under a unified empire in the Han dynasty, they were already regarded, in the form of song, dance, and recitation, as “the common coin of official discourse and the supreme distillation of the very highest expressions of culture.”<sup>8</sup>

Only a handful of songs in the *Odes* can be attached to an author or a date on the basis of either internal or external evidence. The strenuous efforts, exemplified by the Mao commentarial tradition (second century BCE), to provide an anonymous ode with an author and a specific situation of composition often resulted in far-fetched and obfuscating readings. In confronting the difficulty of interpreting a largely anonymous anthology, it is important to remember that the Odes comprised a repertoire of songs continually reperformed on sociable occasions through the Spring and Autumn period and that it is in this form that the Odes survived and enriched the lives of the Zhou elite across the centuries. The later, new performances of a song contributed no less to the definition of its “meaning” than did the usually elusive context of its creation.<sup>9</sup>

Let us take for example, Ode 164 (“Tang di,” Cherry tree). This poem has a seemingly transparent message: it laments discord among brothers and promotes fraternal solidarity. Two early traditions attribute

<sup>7</sup> The performances of the Odes took a variety of forms: recitation, singing, dancing, and conversational quotation (M. E. Lewis 1999: 155–163; Nylan 2001: 93–97; Schaberg 2001: 234–243; Tam 1975; van Zoeren 1991: 39–45, 64–67). Such performances seem gradually to have gone out of fashion toward the end of the Spring and Autumn period, but the Odes continued to serve an essential educational function through the Warring States period.

<sup>8</sup> The quote is Nylan’s (2001: 74) characterization of the Odes’ status among the Zhou cultural elite. She also emphasizes that the convivial use of the Odes “helped to ensure the survival of the collection over the centuries” (Nylan 2001: 77).

<sup>9</sup> My point in this paragraph is in keeping with Nylan’s (2001: 83) observation that “the notion of an original text being attached in a one-to-one relation to a certain situation, place, or single author, whether folk or elite, seems entirely misleading in the ritual setting of antiquity, where conscious repetition and variation clearly endowed oral performance texts with greater normative and aesthetic power.”

the poem to different historical situations. According to one tradition, the Duke of Zhou composed Ode 164 after a rebellion by two of his brothers was repressed and while he was acting as regent for the young King Cheng (r. 1042/35–1006 BCE). According to the other tradition, the song's author was the Duke of Shao, who called a gathering of the Ji clan (the ruling clan of the Zhou) during the reign of King Li (r. 857/53–842/28 BCE) and composed the song to lament the moral decline among the clan members. In this case, "moral decline" evidently had to do with a perceived departure from the ideal early Zhou socio-political order centered on filial piety and fraternal love.<sup>10</sup> As can be seen, the two authorial attributions locate the original creation of Ode 164 in very different times and places, but they agree on its essential message about fraternal solidarity. Perhaps, as suggested by later commentators who attempted to reconcile the two authorial attributions, it was originally composed by the Duke of Zhou, and the Duke of Shao simply reperformed it in the hope that the ode would touch a chord in the errant members of his clan and guide them to return to the fraternal ideal.<sup>11</sup> If so, then the reperformance by the Duke of Shao marked just one, apparently the most famous one, of the numerous occasions on which Ode 164 was presented in various forms in the intervening two hundred or so years. Furthermore, we know from two records that the poem would continue to be performed on sociable occasions in the Spring and Autumn period.

In one record (dated to 541 BCE), the representatives of four states, all members of the Ji clan, met to renew their ties at a meeting hosted by one of them, and during the banquet they engaged in the recitation of the Odes as a way to convey their intentions.<sup>12</sup> One of them, in response to the previous guest's recitation of an ode expressing a desire for peace, recited Ode 164 and added afterward that there would be no disturbance if the four states were close and peaceful as brothers should be. In

<sup>10</sup> These two disparate attributions are found in the *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyu*, Zhou 2, 46) and *Zuo's Commentary* (*Zuo*, Xi 24, Yang 423–424).

<sup>11</sup> Among others, Wei Zhao (204–273) (*Guoyu*, Zhou 2, 46), Kong Yingda (574–648) (*MSZ* 408), and Fang Yurou (1811–1883) (*SY* 9.333) adopted this line.

<sup>12</sup> It was popular to recite the Odes on social occasions during the Spring and Autumn period. The earliest record of such a practice dates to 637 BCE. By convention, a person recited an ode (or stanzas thereof) as an elegant and suggestive means to convey feelings, intentions, and requests. It was common to lift the recited piece out of its original context to suit the performer's purposes. On the conventions in the recitation of the Odes, see M. E. Lewis (1999: 155–163); Nylan (2001: 93–97); Schaberg (2001: 234–243); Tam (1975); and van Zoeren (1991: 39–45, 64–67).

another record (dated to 553 BCE), a minister from Lu paid a diplomatic visit to Song and recited the last two stanzas of Ode 164 at the banquet his host held for him. The recitation of these two stanzas (instead of the whole poem or other stanzas) on this occasion may be significant. The ruling house of Lu belonged to the Ji clan, whereas the ruling house of Song was a member of the Zi clan. Matrimonial and not fraternal ties bound the two states, and apparently that is why, to express his good will toward his host, the Lu minister recited stanzas from Ode 164 in which conjugal harmony is portrayed as one aspect of the harmonious family order that comes into being with the concerted effort of the brothers.<sup>13</sup>

As shown in the preceding example, a single ode could be tied to a wide range of times and circumstances through performance and reperformance and without losing its moral significance in the Zhou elite's understanding of its origin and social function. It has even been suggested that some of the hymns widely known as products of the early Western Zhou were partially updated or wholly created in the late Western Zhou or early Eastern Zhou to recapture the memory of an idealized, lost past.<sup>14</sup> While it is difficult to determine the date and origin of most of the songs in the *Odes*, the continuous reperformance (and re-creation) of the songs allowed them to exist on a level that transcended any particular historical context. It is for this reason that the *Odes* remained profoundly relevant to Zhou elite culture across the centuries, and it is my appreciation for the cumulative and continuously reinforced normative, affective, and aesthetic power of the *Odes* that underlies my use of the anthology.

According to Confucius (551–479 BCE), who, as one tradition has it, edited the *Odes* from out of more than three thousand songs, one of the many educational and social functions of the *Odes* lies in their ability to “facilitate human grouping” (*Shi ke yi qun* 詩可以群).<sup>15</sup> Their relevance for early Chinese convivial life and their pan-Chinese cultural significance make the *Odes* an excellent resource for a comparative investigation. As a whole, the *Odes* served as a depository for feelings and values that were supposed to resonate with, provide instruction for,

<sup>13</sup> Zuo, Zhao 1, Yang 1210; Xiang 20, Yang 1054.

<sup>14</sup> Kern (2009a).

<sup>15</sup> See J. Jia (2001) for an interpretation of this Confucian dictum. Nylan (2001: 76) organizes her discussion of the *Odes*' functions around the themes of “knowing, pleasure, and human integration.” On the important status of the *Odes* in Confucius' educational program and on Confucius' alleged role in editing the *Odes*, see Dai Wei (2001, ch. 2); Zhang Xiang (1957, ch. 4); and Zhu Mengting (2005: 67–70).

and delight centuries of performers and audiences in ancient China. In a comparative inquiry on our specific topic, the *Odes* will be found to articulate sentiments and concerns that distinguish them from their Greek counterparts.

### Honoring Ancestors, Honoring Gods

#### *Ancestors in Their Cups*

Jessica Rawson's observation suffices to illustrate the status of ancestors in the Zhou ritual and sociopolitical order, "Firstly, ... ancestors were central components of society, to whom offerings had to be made at regular intervals. Secondly, society is shown in these sacrifices, burials and other rituals to have had a visible family structure organized primarily by generation and a political order organized primarily by rank conferred by the king."<sup>16</sup> Nearly one-sixth of the *Odes* pertain to ancestral sacrifices, including the ceremony proper and the subsequent feast.<sup>17</sup> These pieces demonstrate the central importance of the ancestral banquet for our understanding of the Zhou discourse of sociability.

We begin with a survey of Ode 209 ("Chu ci," Thick Star-Thistle). In six stanzas and seventy-two verses, the poem provides an elaborate description of an ancestral sacrifice. Scholars always draw on this poem in their reconstruction of Zhou ancestral rites, and it has been suggested that the poem likely served as the model for descriptions and prescriptions of ancestral rites in the three ritual canons (*The Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* being one of them).<sup>18</sup> From stanza 1 of Ode 209 we learn that the harvested crops have filled the granaries and that the sacrifice will be performed to thank the ancestors for their protection and to secure their blessing for the future. Stanza 2 describes the preparations for the sacrifice: oxen and sheep are purified, killed, cooked, and presented, ready to be consumed by the ancestors who will soon descend. The preparations continue into stanza 3. Various meats are grilled and broiled, and the food offerings are laid out. The sacrifice

<sup>16</sup> Rawson (1999b: 22).

<sup>17</sup> Qin Zhaofen (2003: 16). The "Hymns" division (Odes 266–305) contains many pieces that may have been intended as direct addresses to the ancestors during sacrifices. Feasting is more elaborately described in the relevant songs in the Major and Minor Odes.

<sup>18</sup> Yao Jiheng (b. 1647), *ST* 11.335–336; Fang Yurun, *SY* 11.431; Maspero (1978: 150–154); Falkenhausen (1993: 25–32), (1995: 297). Kern (2000), who offers a detailed study of Ode 209 as a performed piece in a sacrifice, questions the traditional claim that the poem describes a royal sacrificial event (87n130).

starts, proceeding in a cordial atmosphere amid the exchange of toasts and the performance of rituals. In stanza 4, we hear the speech of blessing that the officiator addresses to the sacrificers on behalf of the ancestors:

Fragrant were your pious offerings,  
The Spirits enjoyed their drink and food.  
They assign to you a hundred blessings.  
According to their hopes, to their rules,  
All was orderly and swift,  
All was straight and sure.  
For ever they will bestow upon you good store;  
Myriads and tens of myriads.

(Cheng and Jiang 660; Waley 195)

With these pronouncements “the rites have all been accomplished” (beginning of stanza 5), and the officiator announces that the ancestors have had their fill of the food and drink, “The Spirits are all drunk.” The remainder of stanza 5 describes the departure of the ancestors amid the music of bells and drums, the clearing of the tables, and the laying out of a feast for the worshipping descendants. A description of the mortals’ feast in stanza 6 closes this magnificent piece:

The musicians go in and play,  
That after-blessings may be secured.  
Your viands are passed round;  
No one is discontented, all are happy;  
They are drunk, they are sated.  
Small and great all bow their heads:  
“The Spirits,” they say, “enjoyed their drink and food  
And will give our lord a long life.  
He will be very favored and blessed,  
And because nothing was left undone,  
By son’s sons and grandson’s grandsons  
Shall his line for ever be continued.”

(Cheng and Jiang 662; Waley 196)

The effect consistently conveyed in Ode 209 is that of well-orchestrated order and harmony. Those who purify the sacrificial victims do so “in due order, treading cautiously” (stanza 2). Likewise, those who tend the furnaces “tread softly” (stanza 3). In the pledging of cups, “every custom and rite is observed” and “every smile, every word is in place” (stanza 3). In short, all participants execute their designated tasks and rituals

with precision and reverence, “Very hard have we striven / That the rites might be without mistakes” (stanza 4), and they no doubt believe that the ancestors will be delighted as much by the prosperity of their descendants as they are by the impeccable presentation of good family order.

The emphasis on order and harmony in ancestral sacrifices is even more noticeable when we consider the descriptions of archery, one of the lineage members’ collective activities, in the *Odes*. As the middle four stanzas of Ode 246 (“Hang wei,” Wayside Reeds), which depict the banquet and the sport, show:

Spread the mats and the over-mats,  
Offer them stools with shuffling step.  
Let the host present the cup, the guest return it;  
Wash the beaker, set down the goblet.

Sauces and pickles are brought  
For the roast meat, for the broiled,  
And blessed viands, tripe and cheek;  
There is singing and beating of drums.

The painted bows are strong,  
The four arrows well balanced;  
They shoot, all with like success;  
The guests are arranged according to their merits.

The painted bows are bent,  
The four arrows, one after another, are aimed.  
The four arrows are as though planted;  
The guests must be arranged according to their deportment.<sup>19</sup>

(Cheng and Jiang 808–810; Waley 247–248)

The respectful attitude and orderly conduct of everyone participating in the banquet and in the archery event recur throughout these stanzas. There is a lack of emphasis on skill, strength, and competition. The focus is on good order, from the way the beautifully painted bows and arrows are arranged to the decorous demeanor of the guests as they file up to take aim. No champion stands to receive acclaim for his feat, and everyone’s attention is devoted to the order and coordination among the participants.<sup>20</sup> This is not surprising when we cast our eyes on the central figure of this occasion, presented in the last stanza: “It

<sup>19</sup> This line (序賓以不侮) means literally arranging the guests according to their “not being offensive.”

<sup>20</sup> As a convivial activity, archery was regulated by a complex code of conduct, as we can gather from two full chapters in the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* (*Yili*, 999–1014, 1027–1045).

is the Descendant of the ancestors who presides; His wine and spirits are potent” (Cheng and Jiang 811; Waley 248). Zhu Xi (1130–1200) sees in the reference to “the Descendant of the ancestors” (a phrase that denotes the head of the descent group involved in an ancestral sacrifice) an indication that the occasion is a feast following an ancestral sacrifice, whereas other commentators, such as Dai Zhen (1724–1777), Chen Qiyuan (1811–1881), and Lin Yiguang, simply take it to mean that a gathering of lineage members is the subject.<sup>21</sup> The latter reading is probably safer, there being no other explicit references to ancestors or sacrifices in Ode 246.

We do learn from other Odes, however, about the ancestral sacrifices that precede archery games. Ode 220 (“Bin zhi chu yan,” The Guests Are Taking Their Seats) clearly describes archery as part of the festivities that follow an ancestral sacrifice:<sup>22</sup>

The bells and drums are set,  
The brimming pledge-cup is raised.  
The great target is put up,  
The bows and arrows are tested,  
The bowmen are matched.  
“Present your deeds of archery,  
Shoot at that mark  
That you may be rewarded with the cup.”

Fluting they dance to reed-organ and drum.  
All the instruments perform in concert  
As an offering to please the glorious ancestors,  
That the rites may be complete.  
For when all the rites are perfect,  
Grandly, royally done,  
The ancestors bestow great blessings;  
Sons and grandsons may rejoice,  
May rejoice and make music:  
“Let each of you display his art.”

(Cheng and Jiang 695–697; Waley 207)

Just as the prosperity of the lineage (from the ancestors to “sons and grandsons”) forms the background for the representation of the archery game in Ode 220, the first stanza of Ode 246 shows that the festive

<sup>21</sup> Zhu Xi, *SJZ* 17.9a; Dai Zhen, *SDK* 2086; Chen Qiyuan, *MJB* 19.10a, and Lin Yiguang, *STJ* 24.26b.

<sup>22</sup> This is a good place to again warn that, although it is often necessary for analytical purposes, we should not insist on making a clear distinction between religious and nonreligious festivities in ancient China and Greece.

events described in the poem – the banqueting and the archery – are really about the promotion of patrilineal kin solidarity. The poet seeks to persuade by drawing metaphors from nature:

They are sprouting, those wayside reeds.  
 Let not the oxen or sheep trample them.  
 They are forming stem-shoots, they are branching;  
 Now the leaves are clustering.  
 Tender to one another should brothers be,  
 None absenting himself, all cleaving together.

(Cheng and Jiang 808; Waley 247)

When the purpose of a festive event is to urge all the brothers to “cleave together” under the leadership of the “Descendant of the ancestors,” the values exalted in Ode 246 make sense: reverence, order, and the absence of rivalry, even in the sport of archery. Only when they present themselves as subscribers to these values will the participants be able to secure the ancestors’ blessings, which, as seen in Ode 220, will bring happiness for generations of “sons and grandsons.”

Recall the scene in Book 8 of the *Odyssey* in which Odysseus enters the postprandial athletic games upon being provoked by a young Phaiakian nobleman (who is encouraged by his peers). Odysseus scores an easy win over his challengers and then serves them with a harsh verbal lesson. Although not mentioned earlier, Odysseus accomplishes his feat having had invisible help from Athena, the goddess of war who treats Odysseus as her favorite mortal. It may be futile to ask whether Homer was implying that a middle-aged and weary Odysseus could not have triumphed without divine assistance, but that is certainly what the hero himself fears. As he says before taking up the young man’s challenge, “I have been / among the best when I still had trust in youth and hands’ strength. / Now I am held in evil condition and pain; for I had much / to suffer: the wars of men; hard crossing of the big waters” (*Od.* 8.180–183; Lattimore 125–126). The agonistic ethos of the Phaiakian episode is a far cry from the scene in Ode 246. The society where the banqueters and archers sport in perfect order under the leadership of the “Descendant of the ancestors” promotes the opposite of a cult of youth, discourages the use of physical strength, and suppresses individual competitiveness. Organized as an activity for the lineage members, the Chinese archery game is informed by the same imperative, that is, that the participants band together around their leader and present themselves to the ancestors as an orderly and unified group.



Of course, expectations were not always met, as can be seen from Ode 220. Everything seems to be in good order at the beginning of the poem, as is right for an occasion when the ancestors are invoked. However, the poem continues with a sarcastic portrayal of the dramatic change that inebriation brings to the demeanor of the guests; under the influence of drink, they move from being decorous, reverent, and dignified to being uproarious, rude, and unseemly. This somewhat comic satire ends with a rebuke of the unruly guests and a call for more effective enforcement of the rules of etiquette, and it serves as a reminder that ideals of conduct were sometimes just ideals. Clearly the poet believes, however, that the ancestors – the presiding spirits at the festivities – would have been pleased to have seen a pious display of order in all the activities and at all stages of the event. For the Chinese in the presence of their ancestors, the kind of intense competition that the Greeks thought would entertain their gods and win their good will at their festivals and banquets may be just as out of place as the unseemly disorder that the feast in Ode 220 falls into.<sup>23</sup>

The typical blessings sought at an ancestral sacrifice are illustrated in Ode 247 (“Ji zui,” Drunk with Wine). Its first two stanzas show the chief sacrificer (the Zhou king) drinking and dining in the company of the other participants in the sacrifice. The third stanza ends with the statement that “the impersonator of the Ancient tells a lucky story,”<sup>24</sup> and the rest of the poem is a record of this “lucky story”:

And what is his story?  
 “Your bowls and dishes are clean and good;  
 The friends (*pengyou*) that helped you  
 Helped with perfect manners.

Their manners were irreproachable;  
 My lord will have pious sons,  
 Pious sons in good store.  
 A good thing is given you for ever.”

And what is this good thing?  
 “Your house shall be raised,

<sup>23</sup> Some Greeks, such as the philosopher Xenophanes (ca. 570–480 BCE), might disapprove of the great honor the Greeks bestowed on the winners at the games (see Xenophanes 2), but such disapproval testifies to the extraordinary recognition of athletic victories in the mainstream values of Greek society.

<sup>24</sup> A young male descendant would impersonate the ancestor during the sacrifices, a practice that illustrates the idea that ancestor worship is about the endless perpetuation of lineage and continuation from the past to the future. The impersonator would speak through the officiator (Lin Yiguang, *STJ* 24.27a).

My lord shall have long life,  
Blessed shall be his inheritance for ever."

And what is this inheritance?  
"Heaven will cover you with rewards.  
My lord shall live long,  
Have long life, and a gift as well."

And what is this gift?  
"He gives to you a girl.  
He gives to you a girl,  
That you may in due time have grandsons and sons."

(Cheng and Jiang 814–816; Waley 248–249)

The perfect order of the sacrificial scene is reemphasized, and the blessings granted by the ancestor demonstrate that the basic rationale for the rites is the perpetuation and prosperity of the patriline. The promise of "pious sons in good store" in this poem echoes the last lines of Ode 209, "By son's sons and grandson's grandsons / Shall his line for ever be continued," which call to mind the familiar formulaic ending of the inscriptions found on bronzes used for ancestor worship, "May this vessel be forever treasured and used by sons, son's sons, grandsons, and grandson's grandsons."<sup>25</sup> As the man who is at once the chief priest for the ceremony, the head of the descent group, and the leader of the kingdom, honors his ancestor, with the assistance of his "friends" (male members of the same descent group and the king's political subordinates), longevity and many descendants are wished for him. More than any personal achievement, which would be ephemeral no matter how glorious, the raising of the house (室家之壺, stanza 6, line 2) depends on generations of pious sons and grandsons, each of whom will acquit his responsibilities to his ancestors.

The use of the phrase *pengyou* (朋友), which means "associates and friends," in an ode that celebrates the patrilineal ideology requires examination. As has been pointed out by many scholars, in texts and inscriptions pertaining to the Western Zhou and the Spring and Autumn periods, *you* (友) and *pengyou* can refer either to non-kin friends or to agnatic male relatives, particularly male relatives of the same generation, namely, brothers and paternal cousins.<sup>26</sup> Conceivably, the semantic

<sup>25</sup> The recurrence of this phrase in bronze inscriptions can be seen in the numerous translations in Sena's (2005) study of Western Zhou kinship.

<sup>26</sup> Tong Shuye (1980: 122), Zha Changguo (1998); and Zhu Fenghan (2004: 292–297). Wang Lihua (2004: 49) argues that the use of *you* for non-kin friends became common only in the Warring States period.

inclusiveness of *you* and *pengyou* indicates that both non-kin friends and agnatic kin are “helpful” people with whom one associates. Later we will examine instances where *you* and *pengyou* clearly refer to non-kin friends and associates, but in the context of an ancestral sacrifice, such as in Ode 247, the *pengyou* who, with a perfect, dignified demeanor, assist (*she* 摄) the king and chief sacrificer should be his agnatic kinsmen. These relatives also happen to be his subordinates in government.<sup>27</sup> In a way, the king can be regarded as the *primus inter pares* vis-à-vis his *pengyou*, resembling the relationship between a leader and his *hetairoi* (companions, comrades) in Greece. However, the overarching vertical framework provided by ancestor worship and the essential importance of fraternal hierarchy within it (reflected in the privileges that the Main Line enjoyed over the Minor Lines) severely limited the egalitarian implications of the “friendly” relationship between a Chinese leader and his *pengyou*.<sup>28</sup>

A comparison of Chinese and Greek ways of venerating the ancestors is appropriate at this point. The Greeks conducted various rituals, from votive offerings to funerary feasts, to honor their dead kin (see Chapter

<sup>27</sup> Among the evidence that *you* may refer to agnatic relatives are two inscriptions, *JC* 87 (dated to the Spring and Autumn period) and *JC* 3848 (dated to the late Western Zhou) (unless otherwise indicated, all bronze inscriptions come from the *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng yinde*, hereafter cited as *JC*, followed by the inscription number). Both inscriptions state that a man's *you* cast a sacrificial vessel in honor of the man's ancestors. Presumably, a man's non-kin associates would not dedicate a sacrificial vessel to his ancestors.

<sup>28</sup> In his study of Western Zhou kinship, Sena (2005: 317) points out that the bronze inscriptions strongly emphasize vertical kinship relationships (relationships between ancestors and descendants) and are “downright impoverished with respect to terminology for siblings, affines and collateral kinsmen.” In an innovative move, Zha Changguo (1998) argues that fraternity rather than filial piety furnished the basic kinship paradigm in the Western Zhou. As an important part of his evidence, he points out that the core of the Lineage Law system lies in the relationship between the Main Line and the Minor Lines. However, Zha's view misses the crucial premise that the vertical links between ancestors and descendants (specific pairs of fathers and sons being only part of the endless links) provide the framework within which the fraternal relationship between the Main Line and the Minor Lines becomes subject to strict regulation. It may well be true that the power of individual fathers enjoyed less preeminence in the Western Zhou than in later times (as Zha Changguo 1993 argues more convincingly) and that there was a greater emphasis on the reciprocity of affection between father and son than in imperial times (as seen, e.g., in the “Proclamation to Kang” chapter of the *Book of Documents*, which denounces unloving fathers and inconsiderate elder brothers for violating the principles of *xiao* and *you*). There is no doubt, however, that the hierarchical relationships between ancestors and descendants (as two corporate identities) served as the fundamental paradigm in Western Zhou ethical, religious, and political orders.

1), and the term “ancestor cult” or “ancestor worship” is commonly used to describe those rituals. However, as classicists and anthropologists have pointed out, a vital distinction should be made between ancestor worship and the cult of the dead. The cult of the dead involves mortuary rituals that are performed at or near the time of death as well as later visits to the tombs of kin to make offerings, although these visits tend to be irregular and gradually taper off. By contrast, ancestor worship entails not only memorial rituals that are regular, systematic, and continuous but also, more important, incorporation of the dead into a descent group as permanent members endowed with an essential role in forging group solidarity.<sup>29</sup>

The distinction between the two forms of cult is clear in our two traditions. As just defined, ancestor worship in the strict sense characterized the Chinese practice but never existed in Greece.<sup>30</sup> Just as the Chinese patrilineage – an economically and ritually defined corporate descent group – did not have a counterpart in Greece (see the Introduction), the way in which the cult of the ancestors furnished the basis for sociopolitical structure and ethical values in Western Zhou China was utterly alien to Greek society of any period. Ancestors and ancestral sacrifices were a central part of Chinese ritual and social life, perhaps in the same way that gods and festivals structured Greek sociability. In comparison with the tomb cult for ancestors, in Greece the cult of heroes (mortals deified as corporate ancestors of a civic community) was characterized by regular and relatively permanent processions, sacrifices, and games.<sup>31</sup> Scholars have argued that the tomb cult for ancestors as practiced by early Greek aristocrats provided the model for, before giving way to, the heroic cult of fictitious ancestors in the classical period.<sup>32</sup> This plausible transformation once again points to the public sphere as the ritual center in Greece and to what may have been strenuous efforts to appropriate

<sup>29</sup> Goody (1962: 381); Morris (1991).

<sup>30</sup> Antonaccio (1995); Humphreys (1983: 13); Morris (1991). In the nineteenth century, Fustel de Coulanges (1980) famously argued that domestic ancestor worship was the cornerstone of Greek religion. However, recent scholarship (Humphreys 1980, 1983: 140–147; Morris 1991: 156–157; C. B. Patterson 1998: 13–17) has convincingly refuted this theory as lacking textual and archaeological evidence and being an instance of the influence of the evolutionary paradigm in nineteenth-century studies of antiquity, which posited “domestic religion” as a lower stage in historical evolution.

<sup>31</sup> Antonaccio (1995: 52).

<sup>32</sup> Larson (1995: 7). In Chapter 1, regarding the civic takeover of funeral games held for ancestors, I quoted Nagy’s (1990: 143) observation that “the cult of heroes is historically speaking a transformation of the worship of ancestors on the level of the polis.”

the family's authority on behalf of the civic community in the religious realm as well as in the political (see Chapter 1). Rather than bringing about a historic change, however, such appropriating endeavors likely represented a *further* reduction and subordination of the family's status in the Greek religious system. For all that we can tell, the highest forms of Greek religious piety had always been about gods and the public honoring of gods, and family and kinship never enjoyed the kind of ritual preeminence that they did in ancient China.<sup>33</sup> A juxtaposition of two passages, one from the *Odyssey* and the other from the *Odes*, both describing the founding of a new city, will serve to illustrate the spatial difference in the articulation of religious piety between ancient Greece and China. This is how King Alkinoos' father, Nausithoös, proceeds to found the colony of Phaiaikia:

From here  
godlike Nausithoös had removed and led a migration,  
and settled in Scheria, far away from men who eat bread,  
and driven a wall about the city, and built the houses,  
and made the temples of the gods, and allotted the holdings.  
(*Od.* 6.7–10; Lattimore 102)

And this is what Danfu, King Wen's grandfather and later revered as the Great King, does after leading the Zhou people to their new home at the foot of Mount Qi and beginning to build a city:

Then he summoned his Master of Works,  
Then he summoned his Master of Lands  
And made them build houses.  
Dead straight was the plumb-line,  
The planks were lashed to hold the earth;  
They made the Hall of Ancestors, very venerable.  
(Ode 237 ["Mian," Spreading],  
Cheng and Jiang 762; Waley 233)

As shown in Chinese texts and inscriptions, the ruler's ancestral temple served as the site for the full gamut of events and ceremonies related to the state's political and military affairs. Appointments of officials, conferral of rewards, issuance of calendars, arrangements related to the ruler's travels, and decisions about war, peace, and other state policies

<sup>33</sup> In the pre-*polis* period, kings and aristocrats *administered* public religious activities, which were open to all; the rise of the *polis* saw the transfer of public religious authority to the citizenry (see Chapter 1).

were reported to the ancestors and proclaimed in the ancestral temple.<sup>34</sup> Whereas the centrality of the gods' sanctuaries in Greek religious life symbolizes the ideal solidarity of a civic community united in the presence of their common deities, the ritual prominence of the ancestral temple in Zhou China bespeaks a different conception of solidarity based on a hierarchical family order. The essential role of ancestral piety in Zhou political ideology can be seen in Ode 240's ("Si zhai," Great Dignity) portrayal of King Wen, the putative founder of the Zhou dynasty and one of China's most exalted culture heroes:

He was obedient to the ancestors of the clan,  
 So that the Spirits were never angry;  
 So that the Spirits were never grieved.  
 He was a model to his chief bride;  
 A model to his brothers old and young,  
 And in his dealings with home and land.<sup>35</sup>

(Cheng and Jiang 773; Waley 235–236)

### *Festivals*

Ancestor worship, for all its central importance, did not occupy the entire religious imagination of the Zhou Chinese. The Zhou also honored many gods, from divinities intimately connected to agricultural life, such as the God of Soil and the God of Grain, to various nature deities of the mountains, waters, clouds, and so on. Though the veneration of these gods may also have been practiced in certain forms in the domestic setting, as far as we know most rites took place in public, and were of a communal character. Descriptions of harvest festivals and sacrifices to the agriculture gods can be found in the *Odes*. Ode 211 ("Fujian," Large Field), for example, contains the following stanza:

With the Thing Purified, the Thing Bright,<sup>36</sup>  
 With our bullocks for sacrifice, and our sheep

<sup>34</sup> Bilsly (1975: 66–67); Kern (2009b); F. Li (2001–2002: 42–47, 65–66); H. Wu (1988); Yang Kuan (1999: 335). For a visual illustration of the preeminence of the ruler's ancestral temple in Western Zhou cities, see F. Li (2008: 165, 244).

<sup>35</sup> 惠于宗公，神罔時怨，神罔時恫，刑于寡妻，至于兄弟，以禦于家邦。In the next stanza, King Wen is described as "reverent in the ancestral hall 肅肅在廟." Celebrated for his filial obedience, modesty, and administrative gifts, King Wen (the Civil King) was held up as the ideal ruler and credited with establishing a splendid dynasty. His son, King Wu (the Martial King), who actually founded the Zhou and who was noted for his military achievements, stands in his father's shadow in the Chinese textual tradition. See Creel (1970: 64–69) for the different historical statuses accorded the two Zhou kings.

<sup>36</sup> "The Thing Purified" and "the Thing Bright" refer to the grain brought in the sacrificial vessel.

We come to honor the Earth Spirit, to honor the quarters.  
 For our fields have all done well,  
 The laborers have had luck.  
 We twang zithers, beat drums  
 To serve Field Grandad,  
 To beg for sweet rain,  
 So that our millet may be blessed,  
 Our men and women well fed.

(Cheng and Jiang 670; Waley 199)

The Earth Spirit and Field Grandad in Waley's translation refer, respectively, to the God of Soil and the God of Grain, who were in charge of success in farming and whose altars could be found in every village. While the verses brim with the joy of the farmers celebrating a good harvest, an important point remains in assessing the nature of this instance of communal festivity. We know from the rest of the poem that the farmers work on the estate of a lord, who is addressed as "the Descendant [of the Ancestors]." This title indicates that the celebrants belong to a patrilineal group and that the lord is the lineage head. It is from his perspective that they view the good harvest, and he stands to receive the blessings for which they pray to the gods. With this in mind, we can appreciate the exultation in the last stanza:

The crops of the Descendant  
 Are thick as thatch, tall as a shaft;  
 The Descendant's stacks  
 Are high as cliffs, high as hills.  
 We shall need thousands of carts,  
 Shall need thousands of barns,  
 For millet, rice, and spiked millet;  
 The laborers are in luck.  
 "Heaven reward you with mighty blessings!  
 Long life to you, age unending!"

(Cheng and Jiang 671; Waley 200)

Another poem (Ode 212, "Da tian," The Big Field), placed right after this one in the *Odes*, shows the lord conducting a sacrifice in the field where the farmers work. The farmers again are described as taking delight in the good harvest, and here again it is made clear that the lord is the dominating presence and that his satisfaction with the state of the crops pleases the farmers.<sup>37</sup> The relationship between the farmers

<sup>37</sup> Ode 211: "On the crop-balks and the long acre / All is fine and plentiful. / I don't think the Descendant will find fault; / The laborers have worked hard" (Cheng and

and their lord and its implications for an understanding of the agricultural festivities represented in the *Odes* can best be seen in Ode 154 (“Qiyue,” The Seventh Month), which gives an impressive, month-by-month description of the activities of the agricultural year. At the end of this Chinese “rhapsody” on “works and days,”<sup>38</sup> which depicts the routine drudgery of work in the field and in the house, the harvest is brought in, and the farmers can finally take a break from their labors:

In the tenth month they clear the stack-grounds.  
With twin-pitchers they hold the village feast,  
Killing for it a young lamb.  
Up they go into their lord's hall,  
Raise the drinking-cup of buffalo-horn:  
“Hurray for our lord; may he live for ever and ever!”

(Cheng and Jiang 415; Waley 122)

Besides offering thanks to the gods and ancestors for the harvest,<sup>39</sup> the celebration confirms the hierarchical relationship between the lord and the farmers on his estate. Kinship or fictive kinship ties may have been at the root of such a hierarchical relationship. In his recent attempt to define of the nature of the Western Zhou state, Feng Li argues that the lineages provided the crucial link between the state and its subject population living in the rural settlements and that “the control of such settlements through the kinship structure of the lineages was the fundamental mission of the Western Zhou state.”<sup>40</sup> Du Zhengsheng, concerning himself with the five centuries from the early Western Zhou through the Spring and Autumn periods, suggests that farm estates of various sizes made up the social and economic landscape in rural China. Kinship, both real (among farmers and between farmers and their lords) and imagined (between the farmers and a lord who established or took over the estate during military colonization), sustained the social fabric on the estates.<sup>41</sup>

Jiang 670; Waley 199). Ode 212: “Now we sow our many crops; / They grow straight and tall; / The Descendant is well pleased” (Cheng and Jiang 673; Waley 200). In both poems, the Descendant's wife and children attend the sacrifice.

<sup>38</sup> These are the terms used by Waley (119), who clearly had in mind Hesiod's *Works and Days*, a poem on agricultural life in Archaic Greece.

<sup>39</sup> That ancestral sacrifices were a part of harvest celebrations can be seen in Ode 209 (discussed earlier) and Ode 290 (“Zai shan,” Clear Away the Grass).

<sup>40</sup> F. Li (2008, chs. 4, 6, 7). As Li puts it, “In this regard, the Western Zhou state can be seen as an association of thousands of settlements that were organized by the political power of the state through the kinship structure of the lineages. This is the ‘settlement state,’ and it is ‘kin-ordered’” (p. 296).

<sup>41</sup> Du Zhengsheng (1979, ch. 4, esp. pp. 110–121). The Marxist historian Jian Bozan (1898–1968) (1988: 264–268) interpreted the hierarchy as that between serfs and



In other words, in the poems the relationship between the farmers and the lord of the estate is conceived along the lines of the same vertical kinship model underlying Zhou political ideology. The centrality of the vertical kinship model means secondary and complementary significance for horizontal relationships, be they among aristocrats or the villagers. In the poems describing harvest rituals and celebrations, the picture of a presiding lord and the farmers who cluster around him and show him reverence and support is always in the spotlight. We may assume that the festive occasions in a real sense belong to the villagers themselves, who, after laboring hard all year, embrace the festival for the joy and the refreshment of food, drink, and companionship that it brings. No doubt the renewal of ties among the villagers is a most important function of these celebrations. However, what cannot be stressed enough is that this function does not have a basis in an ideology independent of the vertical kinship model but is subsumed under it.

In Chapter 1, we saw how the Greek festivals played a crucial role in defining citizenship and reinforcing the civic ideology (especially its tenet about the duties and affiliations between individuals and their cities) and how the festivals promoted competitive extrafamilial homosocial bonding through such institutions as choruses and athletic contests. The harvest festivals in Zhou China, as represented in our sources, do not perform similar functions. Instead, everything that we know about them points to their being an integral part of a social order anchored on hierarchical patrilineal kinship relationships. Our sources afford no insight into the role the festivals must also have played in the cultivation of horizontal ties within the community.

Here it is necessary to bring up what some scholars have viewed as a significant historical change in the nature and status of the sacrifices made to the Gods of Soil and of Grain from the Spring and Autumn period onward. It is pointed out that, as the regional states gained increasingly greater autonomy from the Zhou court in the Spring and Autumn era, the political importance of ancestor worship declined for the local rulers and rising significance was attached to the cult of territorial deities as a ritual marker of their independence from the Zhou

masters, although he acknowledged the kinship ties of the two classes. Based on mortuary evidence, Falkenhausen (2006: 160) speculates that the paramount class difference in Western Zhou society may have been that between the elite and those commoners who belonged to the same lineages and that, "if so, we would be dealing with a comparatively homogeneous social fabric – one in which the ruling and the ruled considered one another as kin."

royal lineage and their claims to territorial sovereignty.<sup>42</sup> In particular, it has been argued, sacrifices at the altars of soil and grain rose to pre-eminence in the new age because they were “cults in which the entire city participated and that gave symbolic form to the city as a unit.”<sup>43</sup>

It appears that there were two types of altars of soil and grain in the period in question. One type, located in the capitals of the regional states, was the site of political rituals and occasionally of assemblies for political deliberation, which were presided over by the regional ruling elite, including the dukes and their powerful ministers. The other type, which was found in villages and neighborhoods, was predominantly associated with communal sacrifices for the seeking of good harvests.<sup>44</sup> Of these two possible types, the first articulated territorial political relationships.<sup>45</sup> The second, in contrast, stayed closer to the original function of the sacrifices to the gods of soil and grain and offered venues for communal festivities, whose form and ethos might resemble those described in Odes 211 and 212 but also might be in a more orgiastic vein (as will be seen in Chapter 3). In speaking of the rise in the political significance of the altars of soil and grain and in relating it to the “purpose of forging cities as self-conscious political units,”<sup>46</sup> it ought to be the first type that is in question.

We know little about how the general population was involved in the sacrifices at the altars of soil and grain where political rituals were performed. Were these rituals theoretically open to the entire populace, or

<sup>42</sup> Bilsky (1975: 14, 126–127); Kaizuka (1976: 339–341); M. E. Lewis (2006a: 147).

<sup>43</sup> M. E. Lewis (2006a: 147).

<sup>44</sup> This speculative classification is based on an interpretation of the evidence collected in Li Xiangping (1991: 128–138, 151–164, 230–231).

<sup>45</sup> See Ikeda (1981: 108–121) on the transformation from agricultural deities to territorial deities of the gods of soil and grain. Although a chapter in the *Remains of the Documents of the Zhou* (*Yi Zhoushu*) purporting to record an early Western Zhou ritual practice related to the altars of soil and grain may be apocryphal, it sheds light on the kind of political relationship articulated through ritual activities at the first type of altar of soil and grain in my classification. According to that record, the regional rulers who received land grants from the Zhou king simultaneously received a clod of earth taken from the Grand Altar of Soil and Grain in the Zhou capital. They took this clod with them to their enfeoffed land and deposited it in the altars of soil and grain that they built (Huang 1996: 256). This highly symbolic ritual conveyed the regional states' subordination to the Zhou court, a relationship that was also reasserted from time to time through the act of distributing to the regional rulers the sacrificial meat from rites performed at the Grand Altar of Soil and Grain (Li Xiangping 1991: 131–132, 136–137, 188–189). The cults at this type of altar of soil and grain essentially articulated the political relationships among the ruling elite and reinforced the same power structure sanctified by ancestor worship (Li Xiangping 1991: 128–138).

<sup>46</sup> M. E. Lewis (2006a: 147).

were they typically limited to the heads of households? Were the people regularly present at all or most of the sacrifices, or were they invited only to some of them, either at the discretion of members of the ruling elite or as compelled by special political circumstances?<sup>47</sup> What functions did the people perform when they participated?

Although the evidence does not allow us to answer the preceding crucial questions, what seems clear is that there is no sign that the general population's participation ever became associated with citizenship or with its critical implication of membership in a political community. There was no sense that it was either a right or a responsibility of the populace to play a regular participatory political role, nor did the covenants that were often sealed between the populace and members of the nobility at the altars of soil and grain ever denote that the two sides had henceforth entered a commonwealth.<sup>48</sup> In other words, what has been identified as a change in the status of one type of soil and grain altar from the Spring and Autumn period onward may essentially have been a change for the regional rulers who harbored territorial ambitions but not for their subjects. None of our sources concerning the sacrifices at the altars of soil and grain hint about the role that these activities might have played in exalting extrafamilial homosocial bonding among members of the community, let alone in the cultivation of politically significant ties.<sup>49</sup> It seems that the symbolic form that the altars of soil and grain could give to a territory as a political unit served the purposes of the regional rulers' new territorial ambitions but had no discernible implications for the political status of the general population.

As far as we can tell, the Zhou harvest festivals are a far cry from the Greek festivals. Most fundamentally, the Chinese festivals were not civic institutions. Participation in them was not an honor or a right and did not serve to define someone's membership in the community in the same way that participation in the Greek public festivals signified a privilege of citizenship for a Greek that distinguished him from both a non-citizen and a citizen whose misconduct had led to his being deprived of this privilege. If extrafamilial homosocial ties were developed and

<sup>47</sup> The extant evidence focuses on the people's attendance occasioned by political exigencies and summonses from members of the ruling elite (M. E. Lewis 2006a: 147–148; Li Xiangping 1991: 134–135).

<sup>48</sup> This conclusion is in keeping with Mark Lewis's (2006a: 145, 149–150) observation that the conception of general participation in government never developed in the Spring and Autumn period.

<sup>49</sup> Some of these sources will be discussed in Chapter 3.

cultivated in the Chinese festivals, they were not the object of any enthusiastic promotion by the state or society, as they were in Greece. There is no evidence that there existed in Zhou China institutions comparable to the Greek choruses and athletic contests that helped foster companionship characterized at once by egalitarianism and rivalry. Nor did any poet, thinker, or statesman speak proudly of the festivals for their cultivation of relationships and values that transcended and challenged the kinship model.

It may be helpful here to draw a comparison with the celebration of the Apatouria festival among the Ionian Greeks (most famously known from classical Athens). The Apatouria was the central religious activity in the phratries, whose name ("brotherhoods") suggests that they may have been composed of related families in unknown antiquity. However, by classical times (when limited evidence on this intractable subject became available), they had become administrative subdivisions of the citizen body on top of the family and were mainly responsible for matters concerning descent, citizenship eligibility, and inheritance rights.<sup>50</sup> The main activities at the Apatouria consisted of feasting, competitions in athletics and recitation for children, and the enrollment of boys and male adolescents in the phratry (a fundamental requirement for access to citizenship).<sup>51</sup> As indicated in the cults of Zeus Phratrios and Athena Phratria at the Apatouria, the festival's emphasis was on the "community of Athenian citizens as phrateres (members of a phratry) transcending the level of individual phratry."<sup>52</sup> In forging a chain that led from membership in a particular family to phratry membership and ultimately to citizenship, the Apatouria affirmed the crucial importance of kinship for the constitution of the social fabric of the *polis*, which was organized

<sup>50</sup> The phratry in the Archaic period and before is shrouded in obscurity. Whether it had been a kinship group is not clear, and its relationships with other subgroups, such as tribes (*phylai*) or demes, are also controversial. Lambert (1993) tentatively discusses various aspects of the institution.

<sup>51</sup> Lambert (1993, ch. 4); R. Parker (1996: 105).

<sup>52</sup> Lambert (1993: 240). The *raison d'être* of the Attic phratry, according to Lambert (1993: 207), was the establishment of the "community that linked members of one Attic phratry with members of another, and with phrateres in Ionia and the Greek world as a whole, not the community of one local group as opposed to other local groups within Attica or outside it." In this connection, Lambert (1993: 207n12) notes that not one name of an individual phratry is found in the contemporary literary evidence and that "being a phrater often comes close to meaning being an Athenian and hardly ever has the connotation of being a member of one phratry rather than another." Belonging to a Chinese lineage or clan had completely different implications for a person's identity.

as a “generalized civic kinship,” a “regime of [fictive] brothers.”<sup>53</sup> In this chain, the wider community of all “brothers” (phrateres) that was the Athenian *polis* was the end or fulfillment; and the convivial and competitive activities of the Apatouria festival certified the qualifications of the future citizens who would grow up to participate in comparable activities in numerous other festivals.

A similar transcendence of kinship and move to citizenship cannot be associated with the articulation of social relationships in the Chinese festivals. In Chinese representations of the agricultural festivals, what is abundantly conveyed is that those occasions afforded relaxation and pleasure for their celebrants, which in that makes them no different from the Greek festivals.<sup>54</sup> The crucial differences, however, take almost no time to discern. Most important, Chinese festivals had no civic significance. They did not exemplify an ideology apart from or over and against the ideology of kinship nor aim at creating a community characterized by agonistic solidarity.

#### *An Ideology of Communal Pleasure*

The Chinese festivals were convivial occasions that lacked the powerful civic ideology of their Greek counterparts, but there did exist a Zhou ideology about the nature and form of communal pleasure in nondomestic contexts. Paternalism and respect for order and hierarchy constituted its major aspects.

The institution known as the district symposium (*xiang yinjiu* 鄉飲酒, also translated as “community drinking ceremony”) can be understood, I suggest, in terms of state efforts to promote communal ties and to provide an official ideology of communal pleasure that in the final instance is an extension of the hierarchical kinship model of sociability. According to Zheng Xuan (127–200), every third year the chief officials in local administrative communities called “*xiang*” (district, community) invited select guests from within their jurisdiction to a drinking party at the district school (*Yili*, 980). There is a whole chapter devoted to the

<sup>53</sup> Loraux (2002: 198, 200, 208) explores the “Greek tendency to transform blood-kinship categories into merely classificatory categories,” using as an example the “semantic chain that leads from the brother to the citizen by way of the companion.”

<sup>54</sup> A rare early Chinese statement on the function of the festivals was credited to Confucius in the *Book of Rites* (“Zaji,” *Liji* 1567). When his disciple Zigong fails to comprehend the excitement that a year-end festival created among the people, Confucius explains that people need leisure after a long period of work and that even sage rulers such as King Wen and King Wu must accommodate this need in governing the state.

rituals of the district symposium in the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial*, but we should treat with suspicion its detailed instructions on the proceeding of the symposium, which are almost certainly mixed with later idealizations.<sup>55</sup> However, we may come away from it with one certain point about the symposium's protocol: the procedures aim at creating convivial harmony through the establishment of hierarchies and distinctions. The choice of Principal Guest and Second Guest is governed by the principle of honoring capable men, and the presence of such notables as dukes and ministers occasions certain adjustments in the ceremony.<sup>56</sup> However, considerations of merit and rank aside, the principal hierarchy that the district symposium seeks to reinforce, insofar as it concerns the ordinary guests, who make up the majority of the participants in the event, seems to be one based on age.<sup>57</sup>

The district symposium did not aim at cultivating egalitarian communal ties. In Greece the fraternal bond provided the conceptual basis and metaphor for the egalitarian civic community, but in China the fraternal relationship did not denote equality. Instead, it was governed by hierarchy among the brothers, and it has to be understood within an overarching hierarchical framework that has filial piety at its core. Just as fraternal love was valued because it contributed to the solidarity of a family anchored on filial piety, communal ties promoted through an institution like the district symposium were expected to be smoothly integrated into the hierarchical sociopolitical order that was sustained by a paternalistic relationship between the ruler and the ruled.

<sup>55</sup> John Steele's (1917: 53–68) translation conveniently divides the text into sections reflecting the successive stages and provides each section with a subtitle. The drinking ceremony proceeds in the following order: "The Host Offers Wine to the Principal Guest," "The Principal Guest Pledges the Host," "The Host Pledges the Guest," "The Host Offers Wine to the Second Guest," "The Second Guest Toasts the Host," "The Host Offers Wine to the Body of Guests," "One Man Raises the Goblet," "Music for the Guests," "The Appointment of an Overseer," "Pledging the Guests in Succession," "Two Men Raise the Goblet," "Removing the Stands," "The Putting off of the Shoes, Going Up to the Hall and Taking Seats," "Unlimited Drinking."

<sup>56</sup> For example, different layers of mattresses will be used and different rituals for entering and ascending the hall will be adopted when dignitaries are involved (*Yili*, 990).

<sup>57</sup> The *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* states that ordinary guests should drink in order of their ages, from oldest to youngest (*Yili*, 990). On age-based seniority as the governing principle in the conduct of the district symposium, see Kominami (2001: 65–99) and Yang Kuan (1999: 742–769). Kominami believes that by adopting seniority in age as the basis for social hierarchy, district symposium protocol reflected practices that dated back to Neolithic communities. Yang similarly suggests that the district symposium had its origin in the commensal activities of elders' councils in tribal communities.

While the school where the district symposium was allegedly held was a public space where local residents might have regularly gathered to chat and socialize and to a certain degree represented the best candidate for a sphere of “public opinion” in Zhou China,<sup>58</sup> it definitely did not enjoy the functional and symbolic importance of the agora or the town hall in Greece. Evidently, the school was regarded as a supportive institution that a good ruler would maintain and even encourage. As suggested by the well-known story in which the wise statesman Zichan refused to shut down a district school where people discussed and criticized his policies, the existence of such a “public space” for “free” association could not be taken for granted but was dependent on the acceptance and tolerance of the paternalistic rulers.<sup>59</sup>

The paternalistic aspect of the Zhou ideology of sociability can be best seen in Ode 242 (“Ling tai,” The Magic Tower). Beginning with Mencius (ca. 372–289 BCE), tradition has the virtuous King Wen as the protagonist of the poem and his building of a park as its subject:

When he built the Magic Tower,  
When he planned it and founded it,  
All the people worked at it;  
In less than a day they finished it.  
When he built it, there was no goading;  
Yet the people came like sons to their father's side.

The king was in the Magic Park,  
Where doe and stag lay hid.  
Doe and stag at his coming leapt and bounded;  
The white herons gleamed so sleek.  
The king was by the Magic Pool,  
Where the fish sprang so lithe.

On the upright posts and cross-beams with their spikes  
Hang the big drums and gongs.  
Oh, well-ranged are the drums and gongs,  
And merry is the Moated Mound.

<sup>58</sup> In *Zuo's Commentary* (Xiang 31, Yang 1191–1192), Zichan, the famous sixth-century BCE Zheng statesman, received a report that some people who socialized in the district school were criticizing his policies. Zichan refused to act on the suggestion that he shut down the school to stop such criticism. He considered the people's opinions, whether positive or negative, to be a good guide for his future conduct, and he believed that it would be both dangerous and futile for him to attempt to stifle opinion. Mark Lewis (2006a: 146) points out that after cultivating popular support to secure his power, Zichan maintained power by strengthening the state's control over the people.

<sup>59</sup> For the story, see note 58 above.

Oh, well-ranged are the drums and gongs!  
 And merry is the Moated Mound.  
 Bang, bang go the fish-skin drums;  
 The sightless and the eyeless [i.e., blind musicians] ply their skill.

(Cheng and Jiang 787–790; Waley 240–241)

The pleasures celebrated in the poem are conceived within the framework of paternalistic government, as can be seen in the first stanza. Whereas the benevolent king shows concern for his people and does not goad them to help, they come to contribute to the construction of the park “like sons to their father’s side” (庶民子來).<sup>60</sup> The result of such an overwhelming, voluntary popular response is that the park is built in no time, or literally, “in less than a day.”<sup>61</sup> The next stanzas describe the joyful celebration at the completion of the work. The poem’s depiction of how the animal world responds to the king’s virtue by joining in the celebration vividly demonstrates the efficacy of the paternalistic ideology of communal pleasure. Who can resist the persuasive power of the sight of doe and stag leaping and bounding, herons gleaming, and fish springing as the king, a benevolent and loving father figure, makes merry with his people? The jubilant animals have witnessed a public festive occasion that represents an extension of the rationale of familial conviviality, and audiences for the poem are likewise meant to submit to the transformative power that lies in the expansion of the kinship model to encompass the communal pursuit of pleasure.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> The paternalistic conception of the polity in early China finds expression in such lines in the *Odes* as “all happiness to our lord / father and mother of his people” (Ode 251; Cheng and Jiang 830; Waley 254), in the royal injunction in the *Book of Documents* “[to provide the people with security] as if you were protecting your infant child” (“Proclamation to Kang,” *Shangshu* 204), and in a court minister’s exhortation in *Remains of the Documents of the Zhou* that the “Son of Heaven should act as the people’s father and mother” (“Rui Liangfu,” Huang 1996: 394). Metaphorical language highlighted the patrimonial relationship, as in a conversation recorded in *Zuo’s Commentary* between Duke Dao of Jin (r. 572–558 BCE) and the famous musician Shi Kuang. Whereas the ruler should nourish his people as he would his children, “covering them like heaven and supporting them like earth,” the people should love their ruler as they would their parents, “looking up to him as if he were the sun and moon, revering him as if he were the numinous spirits, and fearing him as if he were the lightning bolt” (*Zuo*, Xiang 14, Yang 1016).

<sup>61</sup> Adopting a literal understanding of line 4 (不日成之), Zhu Xi takes it to mean that construction was finished within a day, as though it had been done with divine assistance. He further argues that the major features of the park were named “Magic” to mark the speed with which they had been built (*SJZ*, 16.27a).

<sup>62</sup> In remonstrating with a ruler about the importance of the king’s sharing pleasure with his subjects, Mencius invokes the example of King Wen as described in Ode 242



## Warriors and Model Merrymakers

Throughout the period of this study, the Zhou fought many wars against various enemies: conquest and colonization of lands during the founding years, large-scale wars with northern pastoral peoples during the ninth century BCE, and intermittent but perpetual clashes among the regional states. It is obvious that the Zhou elite cherished their military victories and paid great attention to the training of brave, physically fit fighters.<sup>63</sup> It also seems natural that the Zhou elite would value the creation of a superior close-knit military group bonded by comradely rivalry. And yet, from the evidence it seems that the Chinese elite of the Western Zhou and Spring and Autumn periods rarely sang of comradeship and did not enjoy the exhilarating physical side of martial exploits as much as the Greeks did. What they seem to have valued more, and how this distinguished them from the Greeks, will be discussed in this section in the context of military celebrations. The background for these celebrations are the prolonged wars against the Xianyun, a northern pastoral tribe, and the Huai Yi, a “barbarian” people in the east, in the tenth through eighth centuries BCE.<sup>64</sup>

We will begin with the inscription on the Duoyou tripod, which describes in remarkable detail a battle against the Xianyun. The first part of the inscription relates that an officer named Duoyou received the command to lead an army against the invading Xianyun. The second part records the battle, including the movements of Duoyou’s army and the impressive numbers of enemies killed or taken prisoner and chariots taken. From the last part of the inscription, we learn that Duoyou presented prisoners to his superior (who in turn presented them to the

(*Mencius* 1.2). Zheng Xuan understands the use of “Magic” in the names of major park features as a reference to the divine transformative power of King Wen’s virtue (*MSZ* 524–525). Kominami (1995: 69) believes that the animals were the targets of the archery ritual that followed the king’s sacrifice to his ancestors during the feast and that the subsequent game would be presented to the ancestors, a reading that does not change the significance of the poem’s paternalistic framework.

<sup>63</sup> The major subjects in the educational curriculum of Zhou aristocrats included charioteering and archery (Yang Kuan 1999: 670–676).

<sup>64</sup> The Xianyun eventually captured the Western Zhou capital in 771 BCE and forced the relocation of Zhou rule to the east (hence the beginning of the Eastern Zhou). F. Li (2006) argues that the wars against the Xianyun drained the resources of the Western Zhou and played a crucial role in causing the Western Zhou’s decline. Analyzing a bronze inscription commemorating a mid-tenth-century BCE military victory against the Huai Yi, Shaughnessy (1991: 180–181) points out that by that time the Zhou no longer commanded military superiority against its surrounding enemies and struggled to fend off their attacks.

king), that he was rewarded for his exploits, and that, evidently in celebration of his victory, he made a tripod with which to “entertain his friends and associates” (*yong peng yong you* 用朋用友).<sup>65</sup> It is known that well into the Spring and Autumn period warfare was conducted by male members of aristocratic lineages, who collectively bore a responsibility to fight for their lineage and for the Zhou court whenever the occasion arose.<sup>66</sup> The absence of any reference to ancestral sacrifice in the Duoyou inscription indicates that piety to ancestors was not the only motivation for casting precious bronze vessels and that a lineage-based army might well share a table and celebrate together as comrades in the conduct of war.<sup>67</sup> The Duoyou inscription testifies to the important role of festivities in promoting peer solidarity and raising group morale, and thus in creating an effective army in Western Zhou China (just as in other societies and times).

In comparison with the honoring of their military comrades, the victors made and dedicated far more vessels to their ancestors, to be placed in the ancestral temples and used in sacrifices. The inscriptions pertaining to the wars against the Huai Yi under the reigns of King Mu (r. 956–918 BCE) and King Yih (r. 899/97–873 BCE), most of which contain a dedication to ancestors, can illustrate this point.<sup>68</sup> Among these bronzes are a group of vessels cast by Dong, an officer, who was rewarded for a significant victory against the Huai Yi. Dong dedicated two sacrificial vessels to his deceased mother and one to his deceased father.<sup>69</sup> Also dated to the reign of King Mu is a sacrificial vessel cast by a commander named Jing. After being rewarded for his participation in the battle against the Huai Yi, Jing honored his deceased father with the vessel’s dedication (*JC* 5425). In another instance, an officer named Wuji, who accompanied King Yih on a campaign against the Huai Yi, was given a reward and proceeded to cast a sacrificial vessel in honor of his deceased grandfather (*JC* 4225). As revealed in the extant inscriptions, the single largest number of vessels were dedicated to ancestors,

<sup>65</sup> *JC* 2835. For a translation of the inscription, see F. Li (2006: 147).

<sup>66</sup> Falkenhausen (2006: 412); C-Y. Hsu (1965: 53–77); M. E. Lewis (1990: 35–37); Zhu Fenghan (2004: 396–401).

<sup>67</sup> See F. Li (forthcoming) for a critique of the tendency to regard the conduct of ancestral sacrifices as the only important purpose for casting bronze vessels.

<sup>68</sup> Shaughnessy (1991: 178–179) lists twenty-one bronze inscriptions referring to Zhou wars with the Huai Yi.

<sup>69</sup> *JC* 2824, 4322, 5419. The inscriptions on the two vessels in honor of Dong’s mother are discussed in Chapter 3. Shaughnessy (1991: 177–181) translates and analyzes one of these inscriptions.

and this form of display of filial piety could be occasioned by the receipt of any kind of honor or gifts or by any other happy turn of events, a military victory being simply one example.<sup>70</sup>

The inscriptional evidence suggests that, as much as the Western Zhou military elite resembled their Greek counterparts in their pursuit of survival and success, they widely diverged in the fundamental social and moral values that they embraced. The Chinese warriors and commanders won distinctions and came by their rewards through their military skill and thanks to the solidarity of their fellow fighters, but they rarely chose to exalt comradeship or peer rivalry (as the Greeks would) when it came to leaving records about their exploits. Instead, like other members of the Western Zhou elite and as in other situations, the commanders seemed to believe that the demonstration of filial piety should receive the highest priority when celebrating excellence and good fortune in a military context.

The dedicatory bronze inscriptions just discussed shed light on our reading of Ode 262 ("Jiang Han," The Jiang and the Han), which commemorates the Duke of Shao's military victory against the Huai Yi under the reign of King Xuan (r. 827/25–782 BCE). The first stanza of the poem depicts the logistical preparations and the army's march. The next two stanzas move swiftly to the declaration of victory and the administration of taxation and other matters in the conquered territory. The remaining three stanzas relate the exchanges between the king and a minister at the reception held for the victorious commander. At the center of these exchanges is the glorious lineage of the Duke of Shao (he was descended from the first Duke of Shao, a half brother of King Wu and an important figure in early Zhou military conquests and court politics), as well as its implications for the obligations that obtained between the royal house and the Duke's line.<sup>71</sup> As the king points out, the first Duke of Shao provided critical support when kings Wen and Wu received their mandate, and the commander who has just come off a victory should "carry on the deeds of the [old] Duke of Shao." In reminding the duke of the services his ancestors performed for the royal house, King Xuan affirms the current duke's duties to the reigning king and expresses a

<sup>70</sup> For example, casting vessels in honor of their deceased fathers were a musician praised by the king for a performance (*JC* 5423) and an official given a gift from the king for waiting on him at a banquet (*JC* 4207); dedicating a vessel in honor of his deceased mother was an instructor of archery commended by the king for his conduct at a demonstration (*JC* 4273).

<sup>71</sup> On the accomplishments of the first Duke of Shao, see Shaughnessy (1989).

belief in the inalienable bonds between forebears and offspring. That such bonds are sanctified in rites is seen when the king awards gifts to the Duke of Shao and gives him the following charge:

I bestow upon you a jade scepter and a jade goblet,  
And a bowl of black mead.  
Announce it to the Mighty Ones  
That I give you hills, lands, and fields;  
That the charge which you receive from the house of Zhou  
Is as that which your ancestor received.

(Cheng and Jiang 2:914; Waley 281)

The “Mighty Ones” (or Cultured Ones, *wen ren*) in the king’s command was a common Zhou term of reference to ancestors, and the “black mead” among the gifts bestowed by the king was used in ancestral sacrifices.<sup>72</sup> That the award ceremony described in this poem may have taken place at a banquet held in the king’s ancestral temple is suggested by the inscription on the Guo Ji Zibai basin (*JC* 16.10173), which records Zibai’s victory against the Xianyun and the subsequent audience he had with the king at a banquet in the royal ancestral temple.<sup>73</sup> In that case, the ceremony in which the king urges the Duke of Shao to inform his ancestors of the royal boon points up the religious significance of the political relationship between the two men. The rest of Ode 262 shows the Duke of Shao announcing that, in response to the king’s bountiful beneficence, he will cast bronzes to be used in the sacrifices honoring the first Duke of Shao. Here we see the very same cause as in the inscriptions for the making of bronzes commemorating military victories: in appreciation of the gifts and honors bestowed on him by a superior, the victorious commander dedicates a vessel to his ancestors.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> On the use of “black mead” in ancestral sacrifices, see *MSZ* 574, Zhu Xi, *SJZ* 18.34a, and Ma Ruichen (1782–1853), *MZT* 27.1019–1020.

<sup>73</sup> Sena (2005: 169–171) translates this inscription and analyzes the role of the Guo Ji lineage as a powerful branch of the Guo lineage in the late Western Zhou.

<sup>74</sup> Many commentators have noted the similarity in the expressions used by the Duke of Shao in Ode 262 and by the gift recipients in the inscriptions acknowledging their indebtedness to their benefactors and vowing to have sacrificial vessels cast (e.g., Zhu Xi *SJZ* 18.34b, Ma Ruichen *MZT* 27.1021, Fang Yurun *SY* 15.563, Cheng and Jiang 910). Fang Yurun argues that Ode 262 was a commemorative text inscribed on a sacrificial vessel in the Duke of Shao’s ancestral temple. According to Fang (*SY* 15.563), because the poem’s purpose was to attribute all achievements to the ancestors’ virtues, the descriptions of war in its first half “merely serve as a foil to the second half 無非為后半作勢” (Cheng and Jiang 910, 915). Dobson (1969: 46–47) considers Ode 262, along

This somewhat tortuous chain of conferring and responding to beneficences makes perfect sense in the patrilineage-based organization of the Western Zhou polity, where filial piety is as much a political imperative as it is a matter of individual and familial ethics. His authority being grounded in the construction of a patrilineal network within the aristocracy, the king had both the motivation and the obligation to seal the aristocracy's loyalty to him by diligently promoting their piety to their ancestors. The numerous sacrificial banquets hosted by the king served precisely this purpose, and so did an occasion like the reception he held for his triumphant commanders. Presumably and ideally, the aristocrats thus entertained not only would respond to the intentions of their leader but also would follow the same script in forging their own networks of support.

The prominence of domestic virtue in Chinese celebrations of military victories finds an interesting expression in the portrayal of another military celebration in Ode 177 ("Liu yue," The Sixth Month). The poem is quoted in full to show how the descriptions of the military campaigns move toward a surprising account of a celebratory feast at the end of the Ode. According to Ode 177, the expedition was occasioned by the invasion of the Xianyun, and the Zhou commander in chief was Yin Jifu:

In the sixth month all is bustle,  
We put our war-chariots in order,  
Our four steeds are in good fettle,  
We load our bow-cases and quivers.  
The Xianyun are ablaze,  
We have no time to lose.  
We are going out to battle,  
To set aright the king's lands.

Our team of blacks is well-matched,  
A pattern of perfect training.  
It is the sixth month;  
We have prepared our war clothes.  
Our war clothes have been prepared;  
We marched thirty leagues a day.  
We are going out to battle  
To help the Son of Heaven.

Our four steeds are tall and broad,  
Hugely high they stand.  
We fall upon the Xianyun,  
We do great deeds,  
So stern, so grim  
We fulfill the tasks of war,

Fulfill the tasks of war  
That the king's lands may be at rest.

The Xianyun were scornful of us,  
They encamped at Jiaohuo.  
They invaded Hao and Fang.  
As far as the north banks of the Jing.  
With woven pattern of bird blazonry  
Our silken banners brightly shone.  
Big chariots, ten of them,  
Went first, to open up a path.

Those war-chariots were well balanced  
As though held from below, hung from above.  
Our four steeds were unswerving,  
Unswerving and obedient.  
We smote the Xianyun  
As far as the great plain.  
Mighty in peace and war is Jifu,  
A pattern to all the peoples.

Jifu feasts and is happy;  
He has received many blessings from heaven:  
"Here I am, back from Hao;  
I have been away a long time  
And must give a drinking-party to my friends (*you*),  
With roast turtle and minced carp."  
And who was with him?  
Zhang Zhong, pious (*xiao*) and friendly (*you*).

(Cheng and Jiang 498-505;  
Waley 150-151)

The representation of war in this poem recalls Ode 262. The speaker keeps telling us about such things as the careful logistic preparations, the splendid banners, the well-built chariots, and the beautiful and strong steeds. The lines about the war's progress and its victorious outcome are few and vague: "We fall upon the Xianyun, / We do great deeds, / So stern, so grim / We fulfill the tasks of war" and "We smote the Xian Yun / As far as the great plain." No soldiers appear as brave combatants in this account of war, and the only hero receiving the credit for the victory is a minister, Yin Jifu, who is described as "mighty in peace and war" and "a pattern to all the peoples" without being shown laying his hands on any weapon. In fact, almost as soon as he is singled out for praise in the poem, Yin Jifu is seen in a totally different context than the war. More than the poem's treatment of war in the preceding stanzas, its depiction

of the celebratory feast in the last stanza will perhaps catch the reader of Homer by surprise.<sup>75</sup>

If the evident sense of relief and delight about being home again that Jifu manifests in giving orders for the preparation of the banquet is to be expected, the reference to the honored guest in the last line of the poem may not be. One would expect special note to be taken of one of Jifu's colleagues who holds an eminent position in court, or is a close friend who has been concerned about the conduct of the war, or, more likely, a comrade who accompanied Jifu on the expedition and distinguished himself in battle. In all likelihood Zhang Zhong falls into one of these categories, but he is noted in none of those capacities. He may have been an eminent military commander in battle,<sup>76</sup> a like-minded colleague in politics, and Jifu's intimate companion in daily life, but what commends him in people's eyes and earns him the honored seat at Jifu's victory feast are his filial piety and fraternal love.

The ending of Ode 177 is in fact in keeping with its foregoing description of war, which, in its turn, becomes more comprehensible in light of the convivial ending. By conferring the highest distinction on a paragon of filial piety and fraternal love at his victory feast, which may have seen the performance of the celebratory poem itself,<sup>77</sup> Jifu quickly reaffirms the family-centered values that inevitably suffer in war. Thus Jifu demonstrates that he is indeed a "pattern to all the peoples," an able defender of the state's frontiers who proves himself a champion of the cornerstone principles of Zhou society and polity.<sup>78</sup> This convivial ending forms an interesting contrast with the last books of the *Odyssey*, which

with several other pieces, to be a "genre of glory celebrating," which is "but rhymed versions of the sort of dedicatory inscriptions that nobles, on receiving a charge from the king, had inscribed on bronze sacrificial vessels." In Dobson's view, these songs shared common authorship with the dedicatory inscriptions.

<sup>75</sup> C. H. Wang (1975) discusses the different manifestations of heroism in the Western epic and the Chinese literary tradition. Commenting on what he characterizes as the civilian orientation of the Western Zhou, Creel (1970, ch. 10) draws frequent comparisons with ancient Rome.

<sup>76</sup> Cheng and Jiang (471) suggest that Zhang Zhong was the same person as Nan Zhong, the ninth-century BCE general who led the Zhou in wars against the Xianyun and appears in both Ode 168 ("Chu ju," Bringing Out the Carts) and Ode 263 ("Chang wu," Always Mighty in War).

<sup>77</sup> Using Ode 209 (the poem that opens this chapter's discussion of Zhou ancestral sacrifices), Kern (2000) explores the equivalence between the context for a poem's performance and the occasion for a poem's creation.

<sup>78</sup> In Kong Yingda's exegesis, Jifu's distinction in these two aspects makes him a worthy minister (*MSZ* 425).

celebrate the homecoming war hero's exhibition of martial prowess in his banquet hall.

If the preceding discussion shows that family-centered values dominate even when martial exploits, comradeship, and companionship easily offer the central or sole cause for celebration in the *Odes*, Ode 133 ("Wu yi," No Wraps?) gives a different feeling:

How can you plead that you have no wraps?  
I will share my rug with you.  
The king is raising an army;  
I have made ready both spear and axe;  
You shall share them with me as my comrade.

How can you plead that you have no wraps?  
I will share my under-robe with you.  
The king is raising an army,  
I have made ready both spear and halberd;  
You shall share them with me when we start.

How can you plead that you have no wraps?  
I will share my skirt with you.  
The king is raising an army,  
I have made ready both armor and arms;  
You shall share them with me on the march.

(Cheng and Jiang 356–358; Waley 105)

A song from the state of Qin, Ode 133 strikes a rare note in the early Chinese literary tradition by singing about the enthusiasm for war and the warmth of comrade bonding. The *Odes* is otherwise full of the familiar images of the soldier who expresses resentment for the never-ending war and longs for home.<sup>79</sup> The singularity of Ode 133 may well have to do with the reputed martial character of Qin. It would not be surprising to hear songs taking a celebratory attitude toward war in a frontier state that had engaged in military conflict with various pastoral tribes since its founding in the ninth century BCE and remained marginal to the politics of the Central Plains states for centuries after formally acquiring the status of a regional state under the Zhou court in the eighth century BCE.<sup>80</sup> The poem may have been sung by marching soldiers, or at a

<sup>79</sup> For example, Ode 31 ("Ji gu," They Beat Their Drums), 156 ("Dong shan," Eastern Hills), 167 ("Cai wei," Plucking Bracken), 168 ("Chu ju," Bringing Out the Carts), and 185 ("Qi fu," Minister of War). Creel (1970: 255–256) briefly discusses the grim undertone and lack of glorification in the war descriptions in the *Odes*.

<sup>80</sup> Among many others, Ban Gu (32–92) (*HS*, 1644, 2998–2999), Zhu Xi (*SJZ* 6, 22b–24a), and Cui Shu (1740–1816) (*DO* 75) note the distinctive spirit of Ode 133 and relate it to the warlike customs of the Qin people.



convivial gathering in the barracks, or in some other military context. Ode 133 reminds us that the ethos of military celebrations in poems such as Ode 177 and Ode 262 does not represent the full picture. If the records of casualties found in the bronze inscriptions and historical texts show that war was just as real and as brutal in Zhou China as elsewhere, Ode 133 indicates that Zhou military men, and certainly those in a frontier state, were by no means incapable of embracing their cause and their comrades with passion and pride.

Why are there not more songs like Ode 133 in the *Odes*? Could it be linked to the two distinctions enjoyed by the people of Qin: their martial character, and the relative underdevelopment of ancestor worship and patrilineage-based organizations in the state?<sup>81</sup> Is it that songs like Ode 133 were unique to Qin and did not gain popularity in most other regions of the land? Or, if we believe that the Zhou court exercised central control in the formation of the *Odes*, could it be that songs like Ode 133, from Qin or anywhere else, were not favored by those in charge?<sup>82</sup>

We need to know much more than we do to answer these questions. However, it seems to me that we should not overemphasize Qin's peculiarity vis-à-vis its Central Plains counterparts. First, as suggested by the Qin stone drum poems about hunting and other aristocratic pursuits, dated to the Spring and Autumn period, which clearly echo similar pieces in the *Odes* in language and conception, the warrior elite of the militaristic state emulated the lifestyle of their Central Plains peers, practiced it when they believed they could afford it, and felt sufficiently proud of their emulative effort to commemorate it in stone.<sup>83</sup> The compilers of

<sup>81</sup> See Qian Hang (1991: 165–203) on ancestor worship in Qin.

<sup>82</sup> In this connection, it is interesting to consider the view that civil wars are less likely to generate enthusiasm about military heroism. (Murrin 1994: 241 raises this view to account for the decline of the epic and the war romance in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England.) This view could also be cited to explain the lack of celebration of war and war heroes in early Chinese literature because most of the Chinese wars between about 750 and 250 BCE were fought among the original regional states. However, before the Zhou court's decline in the early eighth century BCE, the Chinese waged most of their wars against the various pastoral and indigenous groups that surrounded them (Creel 1970, ch. 9). The perennial existence of strong enemies from without did not lead to the glorification of the soldier or of martial prowess in the *Odes*, whose form and content may have been significantly shaped by the Zhou court. Rather than credit any single factor (e.g., civil war), we have to consider the totality of Zhou sociopolitical institutions in order to understand the relatively low prestige of military pursuits in China in contrast to their status in Greece.

<sup>83</sup> The Qin stone drum poems are a set of ten poems that were inscribed on stone drums and can be relatively safely dated to sometime between the sixth and fifth centuries BCE (Mattos 1988, ch. 4). According to Gilbert Mattos (1988: 330), author of a

the Zhou court, if they had indeed been responsible for the exclusion of warlike songs from the poetic corpus that played such a prominent role in early Chinese elite education and social life, perhaps cannot be held fully responsible. The Qin military aristocrats seem not to have been immune to the same ideals of sociability that appealed to their peers in the other, more “civilized” states.

Second, a comparative perspective will shed new light on an analysis of the apparent peculiarity of Ode 133 and its implications for any generalizations about Zhou elite discourses on sociability. Whereas the enthusiastic praise of warlike camaraderie in Ode 133 is singular in the Chinese tradition, the celebration of comradeship – defined by both fellowship and rivalry and enacted both on the battlefield and in civilian contexts – is at the heart of the Greek discourse on sociability. Moreover, the passion about comradeship expressed in Ode 133 is of a quite different kind from what energizes the pages of Greek literary works. Let us invoke once again the Homeric portrayal of the celebrated friendship between Achilles and Patroklos.

We will pass over the lengthy and harrowing descriptions, in Books 18–24 of the *Iliad*, of the tearful agonies that torment Achilles after the death of Patroklos and fill him with a raging desire to take revenge – despite his knowledge that he will die in doing so and thus deprive his own parents of their only son. The assertion by the great warrior that even his own father’s death would not grieve him more than did the loss of his dear comrade is striking enough,<sup>84</sup> but let us turn to an episode that bears ultimate testimony to the insuperable bond between the two friends. In Book 23, after Achilles has achieved his revenge by killing Hektor and is to conduct the funeral for Patroklos the next day, Patroklos appears in his comrade’s dream and makes one last request:

Never bury my bones apart from yours, Achilles,  
Let them lie together ...  
Just as we grew up together in your house,  
.....

thorough study of the Qin stone drum poems, “Running throughout these poems [on hunting and leisurely excursions] is one theme, namely, the perfect order of things – from chariots to rivers to the movements of the footmen.”

<sup>84</sup> These lines were also quoted in Chapter 1: “The heart within me fasts from food and drink / Though stores inside are full – / I’m sick with longing for you! / there is no more shattering blow that I could suffer. / Not even if I should learn of my father’s death, / Who, this moment, is weeping warm tears in Phthia, / I know it, bereft of a son as loved as this” (*Il.* 19.319–324; Fagles 499).

So now let a single urn, the gold two-handled urn  
 Your noble mother gave you, hold our bones – together!  
 (*Il.* 23.83–84, 91–92; Fagles 562)

We are once again struck by the contrast between the ties of comrades and family ties. Patroklos' request that the bones of the two friends be held in the urn that had been a gift from Thetis and a token of a mother's affection seems to turn a deep family bond into a foil for the firm bond between the comrades. Achilles immediately gives his warm assent to Patroklos' demand:

Why tell me of all that I must do? I'll do it all.  
 I will obey you, your demands.  
 Oh come closer!  
 Throw our arms around each other, just for a moment –  
 Take our fill of the tears that numb the heart!"  
 (*Il.* 23.95–98; Fagles 562)

The yearning expressed in the greatest Homeric champion's words is passionate and incisive. Later, when Patroklos' body has been burnt on the funeral pyre, Achilles orders that the bones be placed in a golden urn until he himself dies.<sup>85</sup> Achilles will follow his beloved comrade to the underworld, and death serves only to immortalize the two heroes, who fight and deliberate side by side and share everything – their possessions, their passions, and their lives.

Nothing comparable can be found in any type of early Chinese source. In the presence of the Homeric celebration of a friendship that rises above family ties and claims a warrior's deepest emotions, the kind of warmth expressed about military comradeship in Ode 133 only indicates that Chinese soldiers did appreciate the importance of camaraderie in war. What is important from a comparative perspective is that there were so few such songs in the Chinese tradition and nothing close to the Homeric endorsement of comradeship over and against family ties. The mixed ashes of Achilles and Patroklos in the gold urn testify that the ties between the two Greek comrades were sacred, unbreakable, and stronger than family bonds. The numerous bronze vessels the Zhou warriors dedicated to their ancestors in commemoration of military victories bear eloquent witness to what was of the highest value to these Chinese votaries of war. The athletic festivals that were believed to have derived

<sup>85</sup> *Il.* 23.243–244; Fagles 567. In *Od.* 24.76–77, we learn that, after the death of Achilles, the two men's bones were mixed and placed in the gold urn given by Thetis.

from the funeral games Achilles held for Patroklos bespeak the recognition and honor that the Greeks granted to the extrafamilial homosocial bonds epitomized by the two Homeric heroes. The ancestral temples where the Chinese officers and commanders sacrificed and announced their achievements to their ancestors show them to be upholders of a form of piety that was centered on the family and made the cornerstone of Zhou political ideology.

### Kinship Versus Companionship

We have examined early Chinese representations of conviviality in two settings: religious feasts (domestic and public) and festivities that involve sports or that have a martial background. In both discursive contexts the domination of kinship contrasts with the centrality of citizenship and comradeship in the Greek case, but we need to see whether this comparison holds within a broader frame of reference. Thus in this section, we will investigate how convivial gatherings formed an important context within which the Chinese conducted serious reflections on the relative value of kinship and companionship, how the family served as the center for cultural reproduction in Zhou China, and, finally, how non-kinship ties were celebrated in early Chinese poetry.

#### *"You sheng": A Banquet Invitation*

Ode 165 ("Fa mu," The Woodman's Axe) presents an excellent illustration of how the Zhou Chinese perceived the function of convivial practices in forging interpersonal relationships. The poem begins:

*Zheng, zheng* goes the woodman's axe;  
*Ying, ying* cry the birds,  
 Leave the dark valley,  
 Mount to the high tree.  
*"Ying"* they cry,  
 Each searching its mate's voice.

Seeing then that even a bird  
 Searches for its mate's voice,  
 How much the more must man  
 Needs search out friends and kin.  
 For the spirits are listening  
 Whether we are all harmonious and peaceful.

The birds' calls to each other in the woods move the speaker to think that humans should seek company and strive to demonstrate their superiority in ways of bonding. A pun reinforces the reasoning: if even a

bird searches for its “mate’s voice” (*you sheng* 友聲, second line, second stanza), it is all the more natural that a human pursue connections with his “*you sheng* 友生” (fourth line, second stanza). Although the gist of this analogy with nature is clear enough – that sociable activities define humans as social beings – the meaning of the term “*you sheng* 友生” calls for examination in light of the previous discussion of *you* 友 and *pengyou* 朋友. Waley renders “*you sheng*” as “friends and kin,” probably reading *sheng* 甥 (nephews, namely, sisters’ sons) for the homophone *sheng* 生, and many other translators and commentators have taken it to mean “friends, companions,” understanding “*sheng* 生” as an expletive suffix.<sup>86</sup> I propose two plausible ways of reading it here, both of which turn on the semantic inclusiveness of terms such as *you* and *pengyou*. Either we can consider *you* 友 and *sheng* 生 (甥) as blanket references to agnatic relatives and affinal relatives, respectively,<sup>87</sup> or we can render “*you sheng*” as “friends” in the sense of “people with whom one is close,” which encompasses both kin and non-kin friends. Both readings fit the rest of Ode 165, as the speaker goes on to describe what comes from the inspiration he receives from nature:

“Heave ho,” cry the woodcutters.  
 I have strained my wine so clear,  
 I have got a fatted lamb  
 To which I invite all my paternal uncles.<sup>88</sup>  
 Even if they choose not to come  
 They cannot say I have neglected them.

Spick and span I have sprinkled and swept,  
 I have set out the meats, the eight dishes of grain.<sup>89</sup>  
 I have got a fatted ox,

<sup>86</sup> Those who adopt the common interpretation of “*you sheng*” in Ode 165 as “friends, companions” include Zheng Xuan (*MSZ* 410–411), Zhu Xi (*SJZ* 9.11b), Fang Yurun (*SY* 9.335), Karlgren (1950: 109), Gao Heng (2004: 270), Yu Guanying (1956: 177), and Cheng and Jiang (451). The reading of *sheng* as an expletive suffix was advanced by Ma Ruichen (*MZT* 17.505) and has been followed by many modern commentators (e.g., Cheng and Jiang 451; Tang Moyao 2004: 355, 358; Wang Shoumin 1989: 386, 451; Yang Renzhi 2001: 310).

<sup>87</sup> In that case, I suggest that terms such as “*xiongdì sheng jiù* 兄弟甥舅” (elder brother, younger brother, sister’s son, and maternal uncle) and “*xiongdì hunyīn* 兄弟昏姻” (elder brother, younger brother, affinal relatives) could have had the same meaning that the poet attempts to convey here. The use of “*xiongdì sheng jiù*” and “*xiongdì hunyīn*” in the *Odes* will be discussed later.

<sup>88</sup> In Chinese, *zhūfù* 諸父. Waley (137), who translates the term as “fathers,” notes that it means “paternal uncles.” To be more exact, it refers to the agnatic relatives in the generation of one’s father. Karlgren also renders it as “paternal uncles” (1950: 109).

<sup>89</sup> In light of Zhou sumptuary prescriptions, the reference to the eight tureens (*guì*) here may indicate that a ruler (Zhou King or the ruler of a regional state) or at least

To which I invite all my maternal uncles,<sup>90</sup>  
 And even if they choose not to come  
 They cannot hold me to blame.

They are cutting wood on the bank.  
 Of strained wine I have good store;  
 The dishes and trays are all in rows.  
 Elder brothers (*xiong*) and younger brothers (*di*), do not stay afar!  
 If people lose the attachment toward each other,  
 It is because the provisions are lacking.

When we have got wine we strain it, we!  
 When we have none, we buy it, we!  
 Bang, bang we drum, do we!  
 Nimbly step the dance, do we!  
 And take this opportunity  
 Of drinking clear wine.

(Cheng and Jiang 453–457; Waley 137–138, modified).

Inspired by the birds that sport in each other's company, the speaker turns to his own kind: the guests whom he eagerly invites to the feast are his relatives (brothers elder and younger, and uncles on both father's and mother's sides). Regardless of how "*you sheng* 友生" is understood – as a composite term for agnatic and affinal relatives or as an undifferentiated reference to "dear ones," – the crucial insight afforded by Ode 165 seems to be that the necessity for the promotion of interpersonal intimacy is first and foremost conceived within the kinship network.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, if kinship ties are the most important among the primary categories of human relationships to be cultivated, then agnatic relatives (line 16) come first among the "*you sheng*" and brothers in particular

a high-ranking minister is the host (MSZ 411; Yao Jiheng, *ST* 9.260; Cheng and Jiang 456; Ji Xiuzhu 2005: 211–216).

<sup>90</sup> In Chinese, *zhujū* 諸舅. Corresponding to *zhufu*, this term refers to the affinal relatives in the generation of one's mother. I have, with Karlgren (1950: 109), substituted "maternal uncles" for Waley's "uncles."

<sup>91</sup> That only relatives and no friends are mentioned in the following stanzas exercised the ingenuity of the classical commentators. For example, Zhu Xi takes "paternal uncles," "maternal uncles," and "brothers" as references to, respectively, friends who belong to an older generation but share one's surname, friends who belong to an older generation and have different surnames, and friends who belong to the same generation (SJZ 9.12a–13a). Wang Xianqian (1842–1918) identifies the author of the poem as the Duke of Zhou, who in singing about King Wen (his father) and the king's friends referred to the latter as "paternal uncles" and "maternal uncles" (SSY 14.16). Fang Yurun argues that the "way of friendship" (*you dao* 友, the way of being *you*) also resides in kinship relationships, that is, that relatives can and should be friends (SY 9.336).

are included in the speaker's ethical reflections (lines 28–30). However, affinal relatives (line 22) are also an integral part of the kinship network and regularly participate in the fostering of intimacy and friendliness through sociable activities.<sup>92</sup>

As shown in Ode 165, the collective pursuit of pleasure is the fulfillment of a social obligation, and the arrangement of a feast provides the occasion for spreading ethical messages related to the principles of human relationships. Noteworthy in the poem, the pure spontaneity so strongly associated with the origins of the gathering seems to dissolve quickly, as the speaker sets about making plans in a rational manner. He tells himself why he must warmly and earnestly seek the company of his uncles: it is up to them whether to come or not, but at least he has done his part and will, he hopes, not be blamed for negligence. Likewise, in inviting his brothers, he thinks about how the lack of sufficient hospitality has so often resulted in estrangement. Clearly, the man goes about organizing the feast with a keen awareness that the occasion is about social function, kin obligation, and the creation of public perception.

And yet the host, for all his calculations, will hardly allow any doubt about his sincerity, which he sufficiently displays in his actions. He oversees all kinds of activities in the house – the straining of wine, the killing of ox and lamb, sprinkling and sweeping, and cooking – and the delight with which he reviews his preparations is infectious. The last stanza in particular is given over to a joyful celebration of extreme hospitality (“When we have got wine we strain it, we! / When we have none, we buy it, we!”) and collective self-expression (Bang, bang we drum, do we! / Nimble step the dance, do we! / And take this opportunity / Of drinking clear wine.” In other words, what started with an inspiration from nature ends on an emphatic note of spontaneity to enliven the human community that has come together; in between are some well-measured thoughts on kinship-centered ethical imperatives. This

<sup>92</sup> The semantic inclusiveness of *you*, *pengyou*, and *you sheng* parallels the range of meanings associated with the Greek term *philoi*, which can include both kin and non-kin friends and associates (cf. Konstan's [1997: 28–31, 53–56] disagreement with this common understanding of the semantic inclusiveness of *philoi*). The similarity indicates the primacy of kinship and friendship in the social relationships of both ancient China and ancient Greece. My aim is to examine the different relationships between the categories of friendship and kinship in the two cultures, as well as the dynamics of their subcategories. Comprehensive philological investigation of such terms as *you*, *pengyou*, and *you sheng* must await a separate study. Gassmann (2000), who examines two key designations, “*ren* 人” and “*min* 民,” for social groups in Eastern Zhou texts, concludes that “outside the limits of their respective clans, human beings in Chinese antiquity seemed not to be counted as ‘human beings’” (p. 358).

mixture of the celebration of pleasure on the one hand and the articulation of moral principles on the other hand is characteristic of the convivial literature of both China and Greece, although there is a striking distinction between the two traditions in this regard.<sup>93</sup> Whereas the Chinese banqueters appear to be overwhelmingly concerned with kin relations, Greeks direct their emotional and didactic energies at different categories of table companions: comrades, fellow citizens, and beloved boys.

More than being justified on the basis of natural law and social obligation, the cultivation of sociability also receives religious sanction in the speaker's presentation of his festive plan in Ode 165. In lines 11–12, after drawing his analogy between nature and human beings, the speaker further promotes interpersonal amity: "For the spirits are listening / Whether we are all harmonious and peaceful." Under the sign of the ancestors, the convivialists extol the solidarity and prosperity of the kin group and constantly warn themselves against estrangement and discordance: "Elder brothers and younger brothers, do not stay afar! / If people lose the attachment toward each other, / It is because the provisions are lacking." Religious sanction was likewise an inseparable part of Hellenic festivities, although in Greek discourses the presiding gods were mainly invoked as the patrons of civic communities and witnesses of extrafamilial homosocial bonding. In Chinese festivities the dearest "spirits" who listened and responded to the banqueters were the ancestor-protectors of their descent group.

### *The Primacy of Kinship*

The Chinese banqueters frequently express their vision about the correct alignment of interpersonal relationships. Several pieces in the *Odes* straightforwardly argue for the privileging of kinship over other relationships. Let us first look at Ode 164 ("Tang di," Cherry Tree), which deals with a contrast between brothers (*xiongdi* 兄弟) and friends (*peng* 朋, *you sheng* 友生). Set against the background of a gathering of brothers, the poem begins:

The flowers of the cherry-tree,  
Are they not truly splendid?  
Of men that now are,  
None equals a brother (*xiongdi*).

<sup>93</sup> In her discussion of the *Odes*, Nylan (2001: 104–119) sets a high premium on pleasure as a poetic theme and as a social function.



The next stanza reinforces this assertion by pointing out that the incomparable value of brothers lies in their loyalty and support of each other in times of adversity:

When death and mourning affright us  
 Brothers (*xiongdì*) are very dear;  
 As “upland” and “lowland” form a pair,  
 So “elder brother” (*xiong*) and “younger brother” (*dì*) go together.

Nevertheless, the poem is not given over to simple, wholehearted praise of the fraternal bond. Everyone does not always recognize and defend the great value of that relationship. In Ode 223 (“Jiao gong,” Horn Bow), which advocates the importance of kin ties and shows concern about the exemplary effect of the elite’s conduct toward their relatives, we learn that there are both “good brothers,” who are “generous and forgiving,” and “bad brothers,” who “do each other all the harm they can.”<sup>94</sup> An inability to realize the primacy of kin solidarity in one’s life may underlie the failures of the “bad brothers.” The proper balance between kinship and friendship is precisely what preoccupies the poet of Ode 164. His effort at moral persuasion starts with a comparison of the two categories of relationship:

There are wagtails on the plain;<sup>95</sup>  
 When brothers (*xiongdì*) are hard pressed  
 Even good friends (*liang peng* 良朋)  
 At the most do but heave a sigh.

Brothers (*xiongdì*) may quarrel within the walls,  
 But outside they defend one another from insult;  
 Whereas even good friends (*liang peng*)  
 Pay but short heed.

A potential competition between friendship and kinship is already clearly implied. It is troubling to the speaker that, owing to the conflicts that will inevitably arise among the brothers, people tend to miss the importance of overcoming internal differences and of placing fraternal bonds above all external relationships. They do not realize that it is easier

<sup>94</sup> In the preceding stanza of Ode 223, the speaker urges his audience, who are obviously members of the elite, to set a good example for the common people: “Pliant the horn bow; / Swiftly its ends fly back. / But brothers and kinsmen by marriage (*xiongdì hunyin*) / ought not to keep their distance. // If you are distant / The common people will be so too; / But if you set a good example / The common people will follow it.” (Cheng and Jiang 710–711; Waley 212).

<sup>95</sup> An image that invokes a perilous situation.

to maintain a good relationship with friends than with brothers exactly because friends are less intimately involved with one another, in daily life and, even more so, in critical moments. There is a sad consequence to such misperception, as the speaker laments in the next stanza:

But when the times of mourning or violence are over,  
When all is calm and still,  
Even brothers (*xiongdi*)  
Are not the equal of friends (*you sheng* 友生).<sup>96</sup>

That is, people often fail to draw a line between the inner group (brothers) and the outer group (friends) and to uphold the inalienability of the former (because of its true value and despite its inherent troubles) and to put the latter in the subordinate place that it deserves (because of its lesser reliability and despite its apparent agreeableness). Although it is one's brothers who rush to one's aid during a crisis, when the problem is resolved people often have difficulty putting up with sibling conflict and prefer to associate with their friends because friends cause less friction and are more pleasing. This Ode's lament is uttered in special reference to the conduct of convivial activities, occasions that best reflect the intimacy or distance between people in daily life. The speaker paints a delightful picture of a family gathering in the last three stanzas of Ode 164:

Set out your dishes and meat-stands,  
Drink wine to your fill;  
All your brothers (*xiongdi*) are here together,  
Peaceful, happy, and mild.

Your wives and children chime as well  
As little zither with big zither.  
Your brothers are in concord,  
Peaceful, merry, in great glee.

Thus you bring good to house and home,  
Joy to wife and child.  
I have deeply studied, I have pondered,  
And truly it is so.

(Cheng and Jiang 447-452;  
Waley 135-136)

The tone of the instruction and depiction in the preceding excerpt sounds as if the piece had been delivered at a banquet in which brothers

<sup>96</sup> Juxtaposed with *xiongdi*, the term "*you sheng*" should refer to non-kin friends in this ethical deliberation. Wang Lihua (2004: 49), however, leaves open the possibility that cousins are being contrasted with brothers.

and their family members had gotten together to patch up differences and reinforce ties. This certainly could have been the case, but the context does not have to be so restricted.<sup>97</sup> The Ode could have been aptly performed and reperformed at any kin gathering because, just as tension between siblings is bound to recur and there is always too much room for poor judgment on the formation and privileging of relationships, the kind of advice Ode 164 offers will always be necessary. In the last stanza, the speaker takes care to portray himself as a serious thinker and wise counselor, and his message cannot be clearer. Fraternal love should not be open to competition from outsiders, as good friends as they may be, and the happiness of the nuclear family (the “wife and child”) depends on the harmony of the extended family (*shi jia* 室家, last stanza, rendered as “house and home”).<sup>98</sup>

Ode 164 represents the most sophisticated attempt in early Chinese literature to expound the importance of maintaining fraternal solidarity and of putting up a united front against outsiders. “Cherry Tree” came to evoke the ideals of sibling harmony and unity in later Chinese literary conventions. From our perspective it bears noting that those ideals are presented in the context of the family banquet. In the space of two stanzas (sixth and seventh), words that almost exhaust the vocabulary of “harmonious joy” are found clustered together: “peaceful, happy, and mild,” and “peaceful, merry, in great glee.”

The central message advocated in Ode 164 is to be found in another poem, Ode 217 (“Kui bian,” The Cap Is Tall). Here the speaker assumes a still more forthright stance in pronouncing his position, and the convivial context is made clear from the very beginning:

A cap so tall,  
What is it for?  
Your wine is good,  
Your viands, blessed.  
Why give them to other men?  
Let it be to brothers and no one else.  
Do not the mistletoe and the dodder  
Twine themselves on cypress and pine?  
(Cheng and Jiang 686; Waley 204)

<sup>97</sup> The early sources on the creation and later reperformances of this ode were discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

<sup>98</sup> This dependence relationship between the nuclear family and the extended family is spelled out in Zheng Xuan, Kong Yingda, and Zhu Xi (*MSZ* 409, *SJZ* 9.10a–b). On the meanings of *shi* and *jia* (the extended households of the nobility as economic, political, and ritual units) in the *Odes* and in *Zuo's Commentary*, see M. E. Lewis (2006a: 80–82) and Zhu Fenghan (2004: 459–467).

The same rhetorical questions are repeated with slight variations in the next two stanzas of the poem. The speaker insists, "Why give them [i.e., wine and viands] to other men? / Your brothers (*xiongdi*) must all come" (lines 17–18). Then he expands the circle to include more kin than just brothers, "Why give them to other men? / Send for brothers, [maternal] nephews, [maternal] uncles (*xiongdi sheng jiu* 兄弟甥舅)" (lines 29–30). Each time, the speaker, like the observer of birds in Ode 165, reinforces his urgings with analogies from nature. Whereas the cypress and the pine stand for the host, his relatives and guests are compared to the mistletoe and the dodder that twine themselves around these trees. If the representation of the relationship as parasitic can be understood as an effort to compliment the host (whether or not he in fact enjoys higher status and greater wealth than his guests), its point is no doubt about the interdependence among kin and the necessity for solidarity of an exclusive kind.<sup>99</sup> The kinship circle may be narrowed or enlarged according to circumstances, but it is certain that outside of it always stand those who are called "other men" (*yi ren* 異人, line 5 in all three stanzas). Although the poem does not mention friends, they must have been regarded as special members of the category of outsiders, and it is clear that, in keeping with the position promoted in Ode 164, they should not be allowed to take precedence over one's kin.

The earlier discussion of Ode 165 ("Fa mu," The Woodman's Axe) took note of its mixture of conscious ethical persuasion and a spontaneous expression of emotions. The same mixture can be found in the two poems just examined. Because of its juxtaposition of elaborate reasoning (on the relative status of brothers and friends) and charming depiction of convivial harmony, Ode 164 may be the classic Chinese poetic statement on the relationship between kinship and friendship. Ode 217, although without much ethical reasoning, which it replaces with direct assertions, delves deeper into the emotional world of the kin-banqueters. The ode concludes:

When a snowstorm is coming  
Sleet falls in its van.  
Death and loss may come any day;  
Not for long are we together.  
Enjoy wine to-night;  
Our lord holds feast!  
(Cheng and Jiang 688; Waley 205)

<sup>99</sup> The images of mistletoe and dodder twining themselves around cypress and pine occur in the first and second stanzas. On its symbolic significance, see *MSZ* 481; Zhu Xi, *SJZ* 14.4a.

The Mao commentarial tradition locates the creation of Ode 217 in the reign of King You (r. 781–771 BCE), the notorious last ruler of the Western Zhou, and accordingly reads the last stanza as the lament of the king's relatives, who are depressed by their decaying world and attempt to find diversion and consolation in feasting. Zhu Xi, however, does away with the historicized reading and understands the last stanza in terms of generalized sentiments about the value of kin ties in ephemeral human life.<sup>100</sup> Zhu Xi's reading seems to be the more powerful one because it reinforces and philosophizes about the central message conveyed in the previous two stanzas (whereas the Mao reading sounds anticlimactic) and, perhaps, also because such generalized reflections were more likely what the Zhou banqueters themselves took away from the poem when time and again they performed it at their tables.

The juxtaposition of nature images at the beginning and end of Ode 217 is somewhat poignant. The image of the plants twisting around the cypress and pine in the first two stanzas symbolizes the solidarity of relatives, but the falling sleet and imminent snowstorm in the last stanza compels the reader to see such solidarity as challenged and under stress in the face of inevitable mortality. While any human effort is in vain when viewed in that light, hence the sorrowful tone of the last stanza, the poem's ultimate message seems to be that life can be made more bearable by the assurance that there are always close relatives to rely on, and that as mortals we should treasure the limited time that we can spend with those dear ones and never cease celebrating those ties in wine and poetry.<sup>101</sup> By modern times we may have heard similar bittersweet reflections about life and death uttered too often in a convivial context. Nevertheless, it seems to me that what warrants special notice about the early Chinese version is that it tried to portray kin ties as the best anchor in life's sea of uncertainties and that, as the most natural and noble human relationship, kinship deserved constant collective celebration.

The intensity with which the Chinese contemplated and affirmed the importance of kinship bonds versus non-kin ties is, I believe, what distinguishes the Chinese from the Greek in confronting the same issue of setting ethical priorities. Among the Greeks, Hesiod sounds quite "Chinese" when he advises, "Do not make a friend equal to a brother" (*mēde kasignētōi ison poieisthai hetairon*, *Works and Days* 707), but he will

<sup>100</sup> MSZ 481; Zhu Xi, *SJZ* 14.4b–5a.

<sup>101</sup> The same line of thinking can be found in Ode 164, "When death and mourning affright us / Brothers are very dear."

immediately go on to say, “*but if you do (ei de ke poiēsēis)*, do not wrong him first, and do not lie to please the tongue” (*Works and Days* 708–709; emphasis added). In the next five lines, Hesiod continues his discourse on the principles of friendship as an entirely independent category of social relationships and makes no further reference to kinship.<sup>102</sup> Apparently, Hesiod is not as preoccupied as the Chinese with sorting out the relationship between kinship and friendship. Whereas the speakers in Chinese poetry adamantly uphold the priority of kinship, Hesiod readily accepts that people can make a friend equal to a brother and he is all too happy to focus his counsel on how to be friends.

This observation is all the more interesting because in his didactic poem Hesiod makes no secret of his conflict with his brother Perses, whom he faults for being slothful and unjust (e.g., *Works and Days* 27–41, 274–292). All the good advice that the poet claims to be imparting to Perses bears on general moral principles (particularly the virtues of industry and fairness). Hesiod seems to understand his fraternal conflict more as the unfortunate result of Perses’ violation of universal principles of human conduct than as any failure in specifically brotherly behavior. Maintaining kinship solidarity is clearly not Hesiod’s preoccupation as it is in the Chinese poems on fraternal relationships, and nowhere in Hesiod is the conflict between the two brothers presented as something that undermines the fortunes of a domestic unit to which they both owe supreme obligations.

We can infer that the Chinese were more tightly constrained by the bonds of kinship, whereas the Greeks were less burdened with the moral imperative “kinship first and foremost.” It is another issue whether Chinese agnatic relatives, compared to their Greek peers, necessarily loved each other more (certainly not the case for all of them), yet that was the expectation imposed on the Chinese with great moral force and strong institutional support because the harmony and solidarity of the patrilineal family was regarded as the model and the foundation for the sociopolitical order in ancient China.

The numerous celebrations of kinship bonds and the reflections on the priority of kinship over friendship in the *Odes* do not pronounce the actual realization of patrilineal solidarity. Ironically, the constant

<sup>102</sup> “But if he wrongs you first, / offending either in word or in deed, / remember to repay him double; but if he asks you / to be his friend again and be ready to give you satisfaction, / welcome him. He is a worthless man who makes now one and now another his friend; / but as for you, do not let your face put your heart to shame” (Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 709–714).

emphasis on patrilineal kinship unity and the imperative for close-knit relationships among lineage members may have resulted in a strong intralineage rivalry over resources, status, and other objects of contention.<sup>103</sup> The painstaking effort to uphold the primacy of kinship ties in Zhou discourses on sociability shows that such intralineage competition was not only subject to vigorous suppression but also could coexist very well with the staunch kinship solidarity raised against outsiders (the *yi ren*) in all social transactions and found in collective ritual display in the presence of the ancestors.

Just as the predominance of extrafamilial homosocial bonding in the Greeks' songs and philosophical reflections shows their privileging of experience in the common domain (not that the Greeks did not love their relatives, or that all Greek friends and citizens modeled themselves on Achilles and Patroklos), the preoccupation with kinship ties in the Chinese discourse points to the centrality of the family in the Chinese sociopolitical model (not that the Chinese did not value friendship, or that all Chinese men were exemplary sons and brothers). For the Chinese, familial virtues could stand on their own as the culmination and perfection of humanity. For the Greeks, competitive cooperation in the civic "brotherhood" meant the sublimation of biological kinship and represented the height of flourishing humanity. The Chinese were preoccupied with the management of actual familial relationships because both organizationally and conceptually the polity rested on such bonds. For the Greeks, concord or discord in familial relationships acquired higher levels of significance when they transcended the realm of actual kinship and served as metaphors for civic harmony or strife.<sup>104</sup>

### *The Family as the Center for Cultural Reproduction*

The home, where one engaged in daily practices of kinship-centered moral precepts and religious ceremonies, was the site for the most fundamental education in Zhou society, in contrast to the important roles that the sacred grove, the gymnasium, the wrestling school, and the symposium played in the upbringing and education of young Greek males.

This difference in locales can be seen in Chinese and Greek coming-of-age rituals for male youths.<sup>105</sup> In Greece, such rituals took place in

<sup>103</sup> *Zuo's Commentary* is replete with historical examples of such intralineage competition.

<sup>104</sup> Loraux (2002); Thériault (1996).

<sup>105</sup> What I call coming-of-age rituals here are usually referred to in classical studies as initiation rites. Recent studies have rightfully objected to the sometimes indiscriminate

public, civic spaces such as the town hall or the precincts of shrines; they were conducted in the company of the initiate's age-mates and of older males in the capacity of lover-tutors, and within the context of athletic and other competitive activities at festivals. This process was most evident in Archaic Crete and Sparta. In both places, boys left their families at a young age (seven in Sparta) to receive an education in letters, music, and athletics in the company of their age-mates. Their eventual passing into their majority was marked by a set of rituals of varying lengths, during which the youths joined their adult pederastic lovers in feasting, hunting, and fighting.<sup>106</sup>

The cases of classical and Hellenistic Athens were less extreme but illustrate the same process. An Athenian boy had to be enrolled in his father's phratry before being admitted to a deme and thereby to full citizenship on reaching eighteen. His enrollment in the phratry took place at the Apatouria, a festival that was celebrated within the phratry and included competitions among the children. On enrolling in the deme and assuming the status of an ephebe (a young adult aged 18–20 who was poised to become a full citizen), the young man had to tour all the sanctuaries of Athens.<sup>107</sup> Many Hellenistic inscriptions show that when the Athenian ephebes formally became a part of the citizenry, they made sacrifices for their registration in the presence of priestly officials in the town hall at the public hearth before heading to the shrine of Artemis.<sup>108</sup> Other sources indicate that athletic contests were a major component of the activities at the coming-of-age rituals presided over by Artemis, the patron goddess of children.<sup>109</sup> Like the Spartan and Cretan

use of "initiation." Graf (2003: 15, 20) believes that no institution in any Greek city fully conformed to a strict anthropological definition of "initiation," and he advocates the phrase "rituals of coming of age." However, Faraone (2003: 44), who is also critical of the application of the term "initiation" to many Greek ritual practices, adopts a definition of "initiation" (i.e., rituals "that ceremonially mark an individual's entrance into a new group and that focus primarily on 'the successful growth and development of the individual'") that in my opinion can be properly applied to the coming-of-age rituals discussed here.

<sup>106</sup> Calame (2001: 246–247); Kamen (2007: 90–93); Scanlon (2002: 74–75); Vernant (1991: 239–240, 323).

<sup>107</sup> R. Parker (1996: 105); Zaidman and Schmitt-Pantel (1992: 270).

<sup>108</sup> Miller (1978: 168–170, test. 195–202); Zaidman and Schmitt-Pantel (1992: 65–66). It is not clear whether the ephebes under discussion belonged to the *ephebeia*, a military-training institution established in the fourth century BCE for young adults before their formal initiation into the citizenry. Many scholars believe that the Athenian *ephebeia* may have evolved from a coming-of-age institution that had existed throughout the Greek world (Scanlon 2002: 87).

<sup>109</sup> Artemis' special roles as the protectress of children and in coming-of-age rituals: Scanlon (2002, ch. 3); Vernant (1991, ch. 12).



programs, the Athenian coming-of-age rites confirm two crucial points that I have attempted to make about the education and socialization of Greek boys: the importance of the extrafamilial context, and the presence of a strong competitive element.<sup>110</sup>

By contrast, the rituals marking Chinese male youths' entrance into adulthood took place in the ancestral temple and aimed at inculcating family-centered values. The significance of the ritual space in the performance of the coming-of-age rites can be seen in a record found in *Zuo's Commentary* (Xiang 9, Yang 970–971). In 564 BCE, the young Duke Xiang of Lu (r. 572–542 BCE) joined Duke Dao of Jin, leader of one of the two superpowers of the time, in a military action. After the expedition, at the farewell banquet that Duke Dao held for Duke Xiang, Duke Dao learned Duke Xiang's age and suggested to Ji Wuzi, the Lu chief councilor in attendance, that it was time to conduct the coming-of-age rites for his lord. Taking Duke Dao's suggestion seriously, Ji Wuzi replied that it could not be done on the spot because those rites must be performed in the ancestral temple amid sacrifices and ritual music. In an effort to please Duke Dao, Ji Wuzi arranged to have Duke Xiang go through the coming-of-age rites when, on their return journey, they reached Wei, whose founding duke was the brother of the first duke of Lu. We are told that the travelers borrowed ritual paraphernalia from their host and properly conducted the rites in the ancestral temple honoring Duke Cheng of Wei (r. 634–633 BCE, 631–600 BCE).

The most important fact that emerges from the record in *Zuo's Commentary* is that the designation of the ancestral temple as the site for the coming-of-age rites accords with what we know about the spatial centrality of the ancestral temple in ancient Chinese religious and ritual activities. As we shall see from the chapter in the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* that is devoted to the coming-of-age rituals for the lowest rank of nobility (*Yili*, 945–960), the ceremony's purposes were in keeping with its spatial setting and formed a contrast with its Greek counterpart.

According to the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial*, on the day of the ceremony, the guests who have been invited by the family to preside over the rites arrive at the family's ancestral temple and prepare to perform a series of rituals, at the heart of which is the conferral of caps, garments, and a style name that indicate the youth's newly gained adult

<sup>110</sup> See Polinskaya (2003: 101–102) and Winkler (1990b: 47–58) on the roles that Athenian ephebes played in religious festivals and on the parallels between military training and choral performance in ephebe festival participation.

status. Each conferral is accompanied by ritual offerings of food and drink, amid which the officiating guest of honor addresses blessings and exhortations to the youth. Most notably, the officiator urges the youth to put from him his childish thoughts and to abide by the virtues of an adult, that is, always to practice filial piety and fraternal love 孝友時格永乃保之 (*Yili*, 957). The foregrounding of these two key familial virtues is appropriate in the spatial context of the coming-of-age ritual. As the officiator twice emphasizes in his blessings, all the male relatives of the initiated are present to witness the beginning of his quest for perfect virtue. In fact, female relatives also serve as such witnesses. At several junctures during the ceremony, the youth has to present himself to his mother, aunts (father's sisters), and elder sisters, making ritual offerings and paying obeisance. In other words, although the officiating function performed by outside guests indicates that the ritual is intended to initiate the youth into society, in a fundamental sense the initiation is conceived of as the perfection of the familial virtues that a youth has learned at home and now stands ready to practice as a responsible member of a community united by its adherence to the familial ideology. Rather than declaring the youth's acquisition of independence from the home and entry into a world with different relationships and duties, the outside guests represent the community in exhorting family-centered virtues on the initiated. Instead of joining the company of a peer group poised between adolescence and adulthood as in Greece, the Chinese youth is surrounded by his relatives and subjected to their scrutiny and acceptance. Instead of proving himself through public competitive activities among his age-mates as in Greece, the Chinese initiate goes through rituals that emphasize hierarchy, order, and reverence and receives the command to commit himself to a lifelong practice of filial piety and fraternal love.

Whether the Chinese actually conducted their coming-of-age rituals according to the detailed protocol in the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* is not important. What does matter a great deal is that, like numerous other major ancient Chinese rituals, the ceremony that marked a boy's entry into adulthood took place in the domestic ritual space par excellence in China, in contrast to the salient emphasis on the public sphere in the Greek tradition. This contrast, it seems to me, reveals a critical albeit relative difference in the weight that the Chinese and the Greeks assigned to kinship ties and extrafamilial homosocial bonding.

Whereas for the Chinese the family provided both the domain and the purpose for a man to establish himself and win fame, for the Greeks

a man achieved excellence in the company of and through competitive cooperation with his social peers. Telemakhos, shown as a restless youth at home in the absence of his father, marks his transition to adulthood by a secret decision (unknown to his mother) to leave home and embarks on a journey with his companions (*hetairoi*). Moreover, Theognis leaves behind a couplet in which he warns his beloved Kyrnos that “surely there will be little place for those who dishonor their parents,” though his profuse poetic instructions to the boy mostly concern friendship and pederastic love.<sup>111</sup> For the Greeks, family bonds and filial piety constituted important ethical imperatives, but they were not the arena in which a man could prove his excellence or leave a prized legacy. If decency and respectability were associated with ethical conduct in the domestic realm, excellence and glory could be achieved only among and together with one’s peers and peers in the making. If fear of the gods’ rage and punishment was supposed to deter one’s ill treatment of aging parents,<sup>112</sup> the same gods were most likely to delight in evidence of public agonistic excellence. Granted the importance of filial respect and obedience in Greek society, there was nevertheless inherent tension between such expectations and the painstaking promotion of autonomy and competitiveness in the education and socialization of Greek males. In the end, through their physical and symbolic separation of young males from their homes, institutions and activities such as choral and athletic contests, religious rituals, pederasty, and the *ephebeia* compromised filial obedience and developed in the youths assertiveness and independence.<sup>113</sup> Whatever importance Greek thinkers, poets, statesmen, and householders attached to familial hierarchy and solidarity could not but be challenged and weakened by the compelling emphasis on membership in an agonistic yet cooperative extrafamilial homosocial community. In Greece, the common domain rather than the family provided the site for training citizens in competitive cooperation.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>111</sup> *Theognidea* 821–822. Golden (1990: 102), Humphreys (1983: 74), and Strauss (1993, ch. 3) discuss respect, obedience, and old-age support as being expected of Greek children.

<sup>112</sup> In his *Works and Days* (185–189, 331–334), Hesiod accuses children who abuse their aging parents of not fearing the gods and asserts that the gods will visit their wrath upon those unfilial sons.

<sup>113</sup> Discussing the phenomenon of generational conflict in classical Athens, Strauss (1993: 102) describes it in terms of a “paradox of Athenian patriarchy.” The paradox that he observes of classical Athens is also true of Greek culture as a whole, given the shared institutions and values.

<sup>114</sup> Regarding the relationship between *oikos* (household) and *polis* (city) in classical Athens, Humphreys (1983: 69–70) remarks, “The private sphere was seen as a threat

The emotive priorities were arranged differently in the Chinese tradition. The sources point to the primacy of the family as the arena for socialization, cultural reproduction, and the forging of ritual and social solidarity. Friendship and communal ties were valued insofar as they supported and strengthened the social structure modeled on the hierarchical family order. Confucius, the arch-champion of the family-based ethical and sociopolitical order laid down in the Western Zhou, also frequently reflected on the ways and meanings of friendship.<sup>115</sup> Indeed, he showed great appreciation for the pleasures of associating with young people. A spring outing charmingly described by one of Confucius' students is said to have elicited the master's heartfelt approval: "In late spring, after the spring clothes have been newly made, I should like, together with five or six adults and six or seven boys, to go bathing in the River Yi and enjoy the breeze on the Rain Altar, and then to go home chanting poetry."<sup>116</sup>

The kind of spring excursion that captured Confucius' imagination was not intended to create a strong Greek-style extrafamilial homosocial community, where Greek men socialized with one another as free individuals and where boys learned to separate from their families. This freedom and independence was not to be found in the Chinese tradition, where the ancestral temple was the ritual center and the setting for a boy's initiation into adulthood and a lifelong loyalty to the family. At the ancestral temple, men enacted the hierarchy and harmony that were supposed to govern the quotidian familial – and by extension – the sociopolitical order. Filial piety and fraternal love underscored the ethical universe in Confucius' teachings.<sup>117</sup> The delight that Confucius

to the norms of public life – the source of disruptive individual interests and ambitions – rather than as a basis for training in the co-operative virtues." The observation that the domestic domain in classical Athens did not supply the basis for training in the cooperative virtues that held together the agonistic civic community applies to other periods and places too. Classical Athens, however, offers a particularly strong example of the perception that the *oikos* threatened the well-being of the *polis*.

<sup>115</sup> For example, *Analects* 9.25, 10.23, 16.4.

<sup>116</sup> *Analects* 11.26. The context is an informal meeting that Confucius has with four of his students, during which he asks them to express their inclinations and ambitions. Zeng Xi complies by describing the spring outing as quoted and wins Confucius' immediate approval. The other three students speak of government service. The Eastern Han dynasty scholar Wang Chong (27–97) believed that Zeng Xi was depicting a ritual for praying for rain that involved music, dance, and feasting (see Yan Buke 2001: 20–21).

<sup>117</sup> In *Analects* 1.2, Confucius identifies filial piety and fraternal love as the bases of humanity (*ren*), the highest accomplishment in Confucian moral philosophy. In *Analects* 2.21, when asked by someone why he does not serve in the government,

expresses over the prospect of a spring outing cannot be properly understood without keeping in mind his injunction that a son should not travel far while his parents are alive and that if he must travel he should have a set destination (*Analects* 4.19). For Confucius as for his predecessors in the tradition that he spent his whole life defending, there is no talk of passion, glory, or immortality connected to any form of human association whose goals are detached from the perpetuation and prosperity of the family.

### *Celebration of Friendship*

The domination of kinship in Zhou discourses on sociability does not mean that men in early China seldom got together with their friends or that they did not enjoy the pleasures of companionship. As Confucius, who was no doubt an earnest upholder of a patrilineage-centered social order, famously said, “To have friends (*peng*) coming from afar: is this not delightful?”<sup>118</sup> Confucius, who articulated the delights of friendship in such simple yet compelling words, ought to have enjoyed friends’ company constantly and intensely, and we can be sure that the philosopher included friends when he observed that one of the four functions of the Odes was to “facilitate human grouping.” The facilitative role that the Odes played in companionship can be seen in a *Zuo’s Commentary* record of a diplomatic meeting. In 541 BCE, the representatives of four states gathered in Zheng, and they had a great time drinking and reciting the Odes at a banquet held by their host. When the party was over, one of them, Zhao Meng, the chief councilor of Jin, remarked, “I will never experience such pleasure again” (*Zuo*, Zhao 1, Yang 1210).

What Zhao Meng recited at the banquet was Ode 164 (Cherry Tree), the classic Chinese statement on the priority of fraternity over friendship. We should remember that Zhao Meng and his table companions on that occasion represented four states whose ruling houses belonged to the same Ji clan and that the mission of their meeting was to renew

Confucius replies with a quote from the *Book of Documents*, stating that a person who is a filial son and a loving brother can influence government and is in fact taking part in government by practicing those virtues (孝乎惟孝，友于兄弟，施於有政。是亦為政，奚其為為政?).

<sup>118</sup> Zha Changguo (1998: 100–101), who believes that the “friends” in question refer to “fellow disciples,” suggests that teacher–disciple relationships, which began to be documented in sources pertaining to the Spring and Autumn period, may have constituted the earliest category of friendship-based social relationships that were clearly set off from the kinship network. Zha argues that the Spring and Autumn period saw the reference for the term *you* change from “brothers” to “friends.”

the commitment to peace of these states that were actually bound by “fraternal ties.” Thus it was not merely in a metaphorical sense that the profound pleasure in companionship that Zhao Meng derived from the gathering was understood in terms of kinship sentiments. It may be significant that almost all of the poems recorded as having been recited more than once at the aristocratic gatherings in *Zuo’s Commentary* touch on kinship ties and familial virtues,<sup>119</sup> and that no song was recited to celebrate friendship as such on those convivial occasions.

The archetypal piece in the *Odes* that by consensus is interpreted to be about the celebration of friendship is Ode 165 (The Woodman’s Axe), the song that begins with an analogy between birds that are searching for their mates’ voices (*you sheng* 友聲) and humans who are seeking “friends” (*you sheng* 友生). As already noted, what makes the discourse on friendship in Ode 165 most interesting is that agnatic and affinal relatives turn out to constitute the “friends” whom the speaker plans to entertain. I have suggested that we understand this as evidence that kinship provided the paradigm for all strong relationships that could be described as “dear and friendly” in the Zhou ideology of sociability. It seems that friendship, a primary category of social relationship that was no doubt highly valued in men’s lives in ancient China, had not developed an independent language in the six centuries of this study, let alone generated a strong competing ideology vis-à-vis kinship as it had in ancient Greece.<sup>120</sup>

And yet it also seems that friendship can speak with a touching voice from its subordinate position in the structure of Chinese personal relationships. Let us close by looking at Ode 186 (“Bai ju,” The White Colt):

<sup>119</sup> They are Odes 54 (Wen 13, Xiang 19), 164 (Xiang 20, Zhao 1), 173 (Xiang 26, Zhao 12), 177 (Xi 23, Xiang 19), 223 (Xiang 8, Zhao 2), and 249 (Wen 3, Xiang 26). Odes 164, 177, and 223 have already been discussed or referred to in this chapter; Ode 54 will be examined in Chapter 5.

<sup>120</sup> The mourning grades, which stipulated mourning obligations that individuals owed to deceased relatives and other relevant people in their lives, shed light on the relative status between kinship and friendship and among the subcategories of kinship relationships in the ancient Chinese conception. In an excavated Guodian document entombed no later than 300 BCE, we find the following prescriptions: duty to father takes precedence over that to the ruler, duty to brothers over that to wife, and duty to lineage relatives (*zongzu*) over that to friends (*pengyou*) (Lin Suying 2003). The subordinate status of friendship versus kinship as shown in the Guodian document accords with the findings of this chapter. It should be noted that the Warring States period, to which the Guodian document was dated, already saw a breakdown of lineage organization and a rise in importance of extrafamilial ties. On the crucial role of the mourning grade system in defining social relationships in Chinese history, see Ding Ding (2003), Ding Linghua (2000), and Lin Suying (2000, 2003).

Un sullied the white colt  
 Eating the young shoots of my stack-yard.  
 Keep it tethered, keep it tied  
 All day long.  
 He whom I call "that man"  
 Here makes holiday.

Un sullied the white colt  
 Eating the bean leaves of my stack-yard.  
 Keep it tethered, keep it tied  
 All night long.  
 He whom I call "that man"  
 Is here, a lucky guest.

Un sullied the white colt  
 That came so swiftly.  
 Like a duke, like a lord  
 Let your revels have no end.  
 Prolong your idle play,  
 Protract your leisure.

Un sullied the white colt  
 In that deserted valley,  
 With a bundle of fresh fodder.  
 "Though you, its master, are fair as jade  
 Do not let the news of you be rare as gold or jade,  
 Keeping your thoughts far away."<sup>121</sup>

Zhu Xi takes Ode 186 to be an expression of regret that a virtuous gentleman, the "lucky guest" who rides the white colt, has rejected the world and will become a recluse.<sup>122</sup> On this reading, the last stanza of the poem shows that the speaker has given up his effort to dissuade the guest from his thoughts of retirement. Yielding to the would-be hermit's wish to ride into the "deserted valley," the wistful speaker can only hope that his guest will still be heard from and will not escape from the world forever. In this interpretation, friendship seems to be a plausible basis for the relationship between the speaker and his worthy guest. But this is not made explicit, and the strongest sentiment expressed is regret about the loss of a person of virtue from imperfect society.

<sup>121</sup> Cheng and Jiang 533–536; Waley 159, modified. I have adopted Karlgren's (1950: 128) faithful translation of the fifth line in stanzas 1 and 2 (所謂伊人), which Waley over-translates as "the man I love."

<sup>122</sup> Zhu Xi, *SJZ* 11.2b–4a. The other influential classical commentarial tradition on the *Odes*, the Mao-Zheng-Kong tradition, reads Ode 186 as a satire against a Zhou king who fails to retain a virtuous man in his service (MSZ 434).

Some other classical readers, however, took Ode 186 to be a lament about the loss of a worthy friend.<sup>123</sup> Waley's translation, which refers to the guest as "the man I love," may reflect the influence of this line of reading. In fact, there is no real conflict between the two ways of interpretation under discussion; the poem can be read pretty much the same way – as a testament to friendship – but with the relationship between the speaker and the guest presented in slightly different lights.

The white colt, the recurring central image of the poem, symbolizes both the guest's impeccable character and the simplicity and purity of the friendship between the host and his guest. In making the colt the addressee, the poet hardly shows the two friends in a tête-à-tête, and yet he succeeds in fully expressing the host's admiration for the guest and his desire to keep the guest's company for as long as he can. A direct acknowledgment of the host's sentiments comes only in the farewell scene in the last stanza, and even then his deep attachment to his friend, who is "fair as jade" (which has both physical and moral connotations), is couched in the request, "Do not let the news of you be rare as gold or jade, / keeping your thoughts far away." The gentleness that characterizes this poetic celebration of friendship does not make it any less powerful. On this reading, Ode 186 stands out in early Chinese literature not only for its focus on the pleasures of friendship but also for the depth of the sentiments and the rhetorical ingenuity with which it conveys those sentiments. Amid the numerous poems that sing of ancestral sacrifices and that painstakingly affirm the primacy of kinship among human relationships, Ode 186 stands as a tribute to a bond that was assigned a secondary status in the mainstream ideology of sociability but nonetheless played a crucial role in all men's lives.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>123</sup> This is the reading adopted in the Lu and Han commentarial traditions on the *Odes*. Among their followers were the scholar Cai Yong (132–192) and the poet Cao Zhi (192–232) (Wang Xianqian, *SSY* 16.8–9). These two traditions declined as the Mao tradition gained ascendancy in the second century CE, promoted by the great classicist Zheng Xuan. For more on the different commentarial traditions during the Han dynasty, see Chapter 5.

<sup>124</sup> Here mention should be made of the records about male homosexual relations in ancient China. The extremely limited evidence came from later sources (Warring States, Han, and even later times) and was mostly about rulers who kept male favorites. These minions are generally shown as winning favors by their looks and flattery and depending on their lords for their often precarious status. The only safe conclusion that Hinsch (1990: 33) draws based on this body of evidence is that "[male] homosexuality was at least tolerated, and seemingly accepted, by the political elite of Zhou China." So far as we can tell, male homosexual practices in ancient China had nothing in common with the ancient Greek phenomenon, which was characterized



## Conclusion

Greek warriors and citizens feasted with their comrades, friends, and beloved boys and with their families, but it is among the former group that they pursued their highest values and expressed their most intense passions. Likewise, the predominance of kinship in the early Chinese discourses on sociability reflects the conscious and systematic efforts of the elite to establish the cornerstone institutional status of the patrilineal family in Zhou society. If extrafamilial homosocial bonding was essential to social life in ancient China, it enjoyed a clearly subordinate status vis-à-vis kinship in comparison with the example of ancient Greece. For the Greeks, friendship was recognized to be the most noble and intense bond that a man could have, and egalitarian ties among men, not kinship, provided the basic structure for the political community.

Leslie Kurke, writing on the Greeks' passion for public competition (epitomized in athletic contests), observes that the Greek quest for glory was a zero-sum rivalry that "could not take place within the household because ... the house itself was the minimal unit of integrity."<sup>125</sup> It has also been suggested that the Greek age-class system may have been designed to avoid intergenerational rivalry, especially between fathers and sons, and to direct the Greeks' immense agonistic energy toward their social peers.<sup>126</sup> In contrast, we have observed in the Chinese case that the strenuous cultivation of kinship solidarity vis-à-vis non-kin ties could well coexist with or even induce intrafamilial conflict, although such conflict was the object of intense management and suppression for the sake of the supreme goal of kinship solidarity. Questions remain to be explored in the rest of the book: is it true that the common domain was the only place where the Greeks' agonistic spirit was on display (because the house was supposed to be a place of cooperation)?<sup>127</sup> Given the Chinese preoccupation with kinship harmony and conflict, what happens when women are included in the picture? What does the distinction between Chinese and Greek discourses on male sociability mean for the articulation of gender relations in the two traditions?

by the institutionalization of the social and political function of male same-sex bonds and by the glorification of such bonds vis-à-vis familial relationships.

<sup>125</sup> Kurke (1991:16). Redfield (1995: 170) also states that "the house was not a place of competition but of cooperation."

<sup>126</sup> Golden (1998: 104–116, 139–140).

<sup>127</sup> As Aristotle argues in the *Politics*, for a city to remain vital it must create close ties among its citizens by accommodating and encouraging rivalry and must reject the model of the family, where hierarchy and cooperation produce harmony (Saxonhouse 1992).



PART TWO

BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN, AMONG WOMEN



## Public Festivals and Domestic Rites

In both China and Greece, religion was an area in which women played prominent roles and received formal social recognition.<sup>1</sup> If the distinct religious structures of China and Greece had profound implications for the forms and ideals of male sociability in the two societies, as shown in Part 1, what will we find when we turn to the other half of the population? We have seen that the centrality of the highly competitive public festivals and the secondary status of domestic religious practices in Greece corresponded and contributed significantly to the preeminence of the common domain in Greek society. Where did this religious structure leave the wives and daughters, who were denied political participation and expected to be fully devoted to their domestic duties? How did the women's extensive presence in various public religious occasions (particularly their participation in the female choruses at the festivals) on the one hand and the little knowledge that we possess of their religious activities at home on the other hand square with such family-centered expectations? If for men religious participation was a crucial means for asserting membership in a community of peers and for forging extrafamilial group solidarity, how should we characterize the role of religion in Greek women's lives if it seems to have encouraged the same values centered on extrafamilial homosocial bonding?

The disparity between gender norms and women's religious participation in Greece apparently did not exist for Chinese women. Ancestor worship, which was a domestic religion and aimed at promoting the

<sup>1</sup> Classicists habitually cite religion as a major exception to women's marginalization and exclusion in Greek society and politics (e.g., Henderson 1996: 22; Lefkowitz 1996: 78; Osborne 2000). Robert Parker (1996: 80) dubs the recognition granted Greek women in religious activities "a kind of cultic citizenship," and Redfield (1995: 167) states that "in the ritual sphere women had something like parity with men."

solidarity of the patrilineal family, was patently male centered but granted a high status to mothers and reserved essential roles for wives insofar as they contributed to the perpetuation and prosperity of the agnatic descent group. If the primacy of ancestor worship and the lack of a powerful competing ideology based on public religious practices defined the family as the ritual and emotional center for Chinese men and women, what implications does this have both for gender relations and for relationships among women in Zhou China?

The chapter will begin with a discussion of Greek women's participation in public festivals, highlighting the role of such activities in facilitating female competitiveness and extrafamilial female homosocial bonding. Two sections follow on Chinese women's presence in public festivals and ancestral sacrifices and then a section on Greek women's roles in domestic cults. Comparisons between the forms, contents, and relative statuses of women's public and domestic religious activities in the two societies will be drawn throughout.

### Greek Public Festivals

Participation in festivals was an important mark of social status for Greek women. On the one hand, an important social sanction that could be imposed on an ill-behaved Greek woman was debarment from the city's religious life.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, election to serve in public cults brought the highest distinction a woman might hope to obtain in Greek society.<sup>3</sup> A famous passage in Aristophanes' (ca. 450–ca. 388 BCE) comedy *Lysistrata* (staged in 411 BCE) depicts an Athenian woman proudly presenting a list of the religious services she has performed (*Lysistrata* 638–647; Sommerstein 83). At age seven she acted as one of the two Arrhephoroi, whose duties included weaving the robe to be dedicated to Athena at the Panathenaia (the quadrennial pan-Hellenic festival honoring the goddess), and marching in the procession. Later she served as a Grinder and was charged with helping prepare ritual cakes for a goddess, probably Demeter, at the pan-Hellenic festival of Eleusis. When she was ten, she was selected to take part in the quadrennial Brauronia festival, where, under the aegis of Artemis Athenian girls engaged in initiatory rituals and athletic games. Finally, she partici-

<sup>2</sup> Blundell (1995: 160–169); Cohen (1991: 225); Henderson (1996: 22).

<sup>3</sup> Dillon (2002, chs. 2 and 3).

pated as a basket bearer in the procession of an unnamed festival, which Jeffrey Henderson has suggested was the Panathenaia.<sup>4</sup>

Only a select few women could have put together such an impressive resume, even after democracy had greatly expanded the pool of candidates for such cultic roles as priestess and basket bearer.<sup>5</sup> A more common experience linking religious festivals with social status was for women to take part in the choruses that adorned the celebrations throughout the Hellenic world.<sup>6</sup>

### *Women's Choruses*

As may be seen in Euripides' (480–406 BCE) play *Elektra*, named for the daughter of King Agamemnon and Klytaimnestra, every well-born Greek woman expected to perform in a chorus. After the murder of Agamemnon by Klytaimnestra and her lover, Elektra, a princess, is forced to marry a peasant, who remains her nominal husband out of respect for her noble line. In her long lament for the ignoble life into which she has fallen, Elektra refers to how her unusual status has prevented her from participating in the chorus of either wives or of unmarried girls (*Elektra* 310ff.). Clearly, Euripides means choral participation to evoke normal social life. By this same token, when some local girls urge Elektra to join the maidens' dance at a forthcoming festival in honor of Hera (*Elektra* 167ff.), the invitation indicates that the disgraced and shattered princess is accepted and respected by her rustic neighbors. After Elektra has assisted her brother in murdering their mother, the matricide shudders at her crime and cries, "Where shall I take refuge? What dance and wedding can I attend? What husband will receive me to his bridal chamber?" (*Elektra* 1198–1200) The juxtaposition of references to choral participation and wedding celebrations and marriage emphasizes the great significance of choral involvement in the life of a Greek woman. It signaled social recognition and membership in a community, and constituted an accomplishment of womanhood. Hence the woes of a woman excluded from it.

Aside from being a crucial indicator of social status, choral participation was an important basis for the cultivation of female friendships. Commonly organized into age groups and practicing together for

<sup>4</sup> Henderson (1996: 216n143). For a survey of girls' and young women's public religious roles in classical Greece, see Dillon (2002, ch. 2).

<sup>5</sup> Dillon (2002: 60, 76).

<sup>6</sup> According to Calame (2001: 25), in religious rites, choral performances were more often associated with women than with men.

public performance on various occasions,<sup>7</sup> choruses were conducive to the fostering of close extrakinship relationships and often appear as the emotional focus of a woman's life in Greek literature. For example, in Aristophanes' *Women at the Thesmophoria* (lines 1029–1130), the captive maiden, Andromeda, laments that she can no longer dance with girls of her age. Also, in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the captive Greek maidens who serve as Iphigenia's attendants in Tauris (the modern Crimea) wish that they could return to their homeland and rejoin the choruses. In remembering their dance, the girls reveal what it is about their experience together that warms their hearts in their current state of captivity:

It's O for the contest of beauties (*hamillas charitōn*),  
 For the sweet forms costly-arrayed,  
 For the raiment of cunningest broidery,  
 For the challenge (*erin*) of maid to maid,  
 For the veil light-tossing, the loose curl crossing  
 My cheek with its flicker of shade!

(*Iphigenia in Tauris* 1147–1151)

In this reminiscence, intense competition among the chorus members in personal appearance and artistic presentation serves as the basis for their bonding past and present. Euripides may be describing a wedding dance here, and we know that Athenian young women's festival dances were not institutionalized and did not involve public competitions as in the boys' and men's dithyrambic choruses under the democracy.<sup>8</sup> However, the agonistic spirit and peer bonding that characterize the dance described by Euripides are also the defining qualities of the maidens' choral songs that came from seventh-century BCE festival competitions in Sparta. The author of these songs was the great choral lyric poet Alkman, whose two extensive fragments represent the most brilliant specimens of the genre that have survived.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Calame (2001: 26–30) presents sources on the contemporaneity of the chorus members.

<sup>8</sup> Kowalzig (2004: 48); R. Parker (1996: 80); N. Wilson (2000: 40). It is not known whether the democracy brought about a change in the public presentation of women's choruses in Athens. Parker acknowledges that the Athenians may have been different from the Spartans from the very beginning. Athens' male dithyrambic choruses were discussed in Chapter 1.

<sup>9</sup> Pindar composed three books of maiden songs but only two fragments have survived. Pomeroy (2002, ch. 6) discusses the role of religion in Spartan women's lives (pp. 106–108 on the Archaic and classical periods).



Alkman's famous long fragment commonly known as *The Partheneion* (Maiden Song) will be examined shortly. First we will look at a shorter fragment (Alkman 3) that belonged to what should have been a maiden song of at least 126 verses.<sup>10</sup> Following David Campbell's reconstruction and translation, it reads:

Olympian (Muses, fill) my heart (with longing for a new) song: I (am eager) to hear the (maiden) voice of girls singing in a beautiful melody (to the heavens) ... : (it?) will scatter sweet (sleep) from my eyes and lead me to go to the assembly (of Antheia?), (where) I shall (rapidly) shake my yellow hair ... soft feet ...

After 50 missing verses (which may contain a mythological narrative), the fragment resumes:

... and with limb-loosening desire, and she looks (at me?) more meltingly than sleep or death, and not in vain is she sweet. But Astymeloisa makes no answer to me; no, holding the garland, like a bright star of the shining heavens or a golden branch or soft down ... she passed through with her long feet; ... giving beauty to her tresses, the moist charm of Kinyras sits on the maiden's hair. (Truly) Astymeloisa (goes) through the crowd the darling of the people ... taking ... I say; ... if only ... a silver cup ... I were to see whether perchance she were to love me. If only she came nearer and took my soft hand, immediately I would become her suppliant. As it is, ... a wise girl ... girl ... me having ... the girl ... grace ...<sup>11</sup>

Mutilated as it is, this choral lyric, which adopts the first person singular, offers a clear sense of the strong bonds that tied the girls of the chorus to each other, to their leader (Astymeloisa), and to their collective. The first fragment shows the girls in a state of excitement as they rise in the early morning to prepare for the performance that day at the festival for Hera,<sup>12</sup> where their lovely melody will go up to the sky and their yellow hair will move to the quick rhythm of their soft dancing feet. The girls' eager anticipation of that hour is effectively conveyed by the image of their setting out for the festival when sweet sleep is scattered from their eyes. What is still sweeter than sleep for these young girls on this cold morning are the honor of mounting a public display of excellence,

<sup>10</sup> This is according to Campbell's Loeb edition (p. 381n9).

<sup>11</sup> The papyrus preserves the beginnings of another thirty lines.

<sup>12</sup> The readable text has only "the assembly" (*agon*). Campbell tentatively supplies "of Antheia" (Hera of the Flowers) on the basis of the meaning of "*puleōn*" (garland), which occurs in line 65 below where Astymeloisa is described as holding the garland. According to *Deipnosophists* 15.678a, *puleōn* refers to the garland that the Spartans offered to Hera.

and the joy, indeed, exultation, of being a band at whose center is a girl whose beauty, charm, and talent make her their indisputable leader. In the first part of the fragment, the competitive nature of the day's event (of all Greek festivals, for that matter) is indicated by the use of the word "*agōn*" (gathering of people for games; contests at the games, rendered as "assembly" by Campbell) for the event.

The expression of admiration for the girl who holds the key to the team's superior performance, Astymeloisa, is the central subject of the fragment's second part. Astymeloisa fixes the attention of the entire chorus. Passing among them and holding the garland to be dedicated to the goddess who will be honored at the festival (Hera?), Astymeloisa is compared to all that evokes luster and tenderness ("a bright star of the shining heavens or a golden branch or soft down"). True to her name, which means "darling of the city," she wins the love of the festive crowd before which the chorus appears. Such public recognition must have been the highest honor for choruses funded by and trained to serve the community, and Astymeloisa's companions duly speak of it with pride. Nevertheless, in the poem it takes second place to the erotic yearning the girls unabashedly express for their leader. In the classic language for describing sexual love, they are seized with "limb-loosening desire,"<sup>13</sup> and she glances at them "more meltingly than sleep or death." Also in keeping with the rules of the classic game of courtship, Astymeloisa is unresponsive to her admirers' wooing ("she makes no answer to me") but ruthlessly keeps them under her spell by a careless demonstration of her natural beauty, grace, and spirit in song, dance, and walk. Such neglect by their noble beloved only drives her admirers on. They adore her every movement and every part of her body, from the "long feet" that carry her through the ranks of the chorus and the spectators (to the altar?), to the hair that glistens and exudes fragrance under the caress of Cyprian perfumed oil. A climax of the courtship seems to come when the chorus enacts the offering of a libation: "Taking ... if only ... a silver cup ... I were to see whether perchance she were to love me. If only she came nearer and took my soft hand, immediately I would become her suppliant."

Astymeloisa may be dancing past her teammates, each of whom is stretching out a libation cup (real or imaginary) in her hands, and may in time take one cup to be poured to the goddess. In the earnest plea from every girl that their leader come to her and take the cup from

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Hesiod, *Theogony* 910–911, Arkhilokhos 196.

her, Astymeloisa seems to have become identified with the goddess, the ostensible recipient of the libation. Just as do the worshippers seeking favor from the goddess, the chorus members hope to attract the attention of their leader with gifts, look forward to the results of their solicitation with eagerness and humility, and are overwhelmed with bliss if she grants them any favor. Such confusion, which becomes complete with the use of the word "suppliant" (*hiketis*) for the rank-and-file members of the chorus, gives the strongest testimony about the bonds that tie the unit together. Not only are such bonds declared unbreakable, just as worshippers solemnly vow never to abandon their divinities, but there is also a salient emphasis on the erotic dimension of the relationship. As shown in this song, the foundation of such close emotional ties is the considerable amount of time the girls share in the pursuit of their activities and goals under the leadership of someone who commands the devotion of her peers.

The predominant attention received by Astymeloisa and the subordinate and supportive position of her teammates in Alkman 3 deserve a note. This kind of relationship was in keeping with the common Greek notion of companionship. As previous semantic analyses have shown, the Greek terms for companions, *hetairos* (male) and *hetaira* (female), generally indicate a subordinate relationship with the person leading the group, the *primus inter pares*.<sup>14</sup> It is understandable that because of the agonistic nature of the choral events a maiden song should highlight the subordination and the resultant cohesion around a strong center. As in a military context, a chorus needed both to win the coveted victory. What was different from a battle was that the competition was over beauty, elegance, and musical talent.<sup>15</sup>

That the combat analogy is significant for our understanding of chorus-based female friendships finds a good illustration in the Louvre *Partheneion*, the long fragment on which Alkman's fame as the preeminent Archaic choral lyric poet chiefly rests for the modern reader. After a lost proem that may have contained invocations to gods and references

<sup>14</sup> See Calame (2001: 33–34). Besides the references cited therein, see also Halperin (1990).

<sup>15</sup> Lefkowitz (1986: 52) may have overstated the case in observing that "it is certainly true that male poets, so far as we know, did not describe intense emotional (and physical) attachments between girls in the same age-group (*helikia*), such as the ones Sappho describes in her poems." The degrees of intensity arguably may have differed, but a poem like the one by Alkman describes nothing if not the emotional involvement among the girls in the same chorus. Sappho and her female circle will be discussed in Chapter 5.

to the circumstances of the choral performance, and following a substantial portion devoted to the narration of a myth, the rest of the *Partheneion* (62 verses) basically consists of a eulogy that the chorus sings of its two most outstanding members. In fact, the focus is almost exclusively on the leader, Hagesikhora (whose name means “choir leader”). Agido, despite coming in for praise first and being impressively compared to the shining sun, actually functions as a foil for Hagesikhora after the initial brief independent mention. In the following we shall examine how the unit tightly knit around Hagesikhora is described in similar ways to Astymeloisa’s team and also how in their present highly fragmented form the two songs seem to bring out different aspects of the life in the young women’s choruses.<sup>16</sup>

Like Astymeloisa’s, Hagesikhora’s leadership position is founded on her exceptional beauty and musical accomplishment. Her lovely yellow hair has the “bloom of undefiled gold” (line 54), her face is like silver (line 55), and she is “fair-ankled” (line 78). Though her singing is, for fear of committing hubris, modestly said to be no more melodious than that of the Sirens (lines 96–97), she receives the whole credit from her teammates for leading them to sing a song that is like “that of a swan on the waters of the Xanthos” (lines 100–101).

The kind of unquestioned devotion Hagesikhora enjoys in the group is also described with great pains, although so far as can be judged from the extant fragment it is not couched in explicit erotic expressions. The girls duly praise their leader’s beauty, but they neither dwell on it for long nor tell of any ravishing sensual appeal that it exerts upon them.<sup>17</sup> Instead, they pay repeated tribute to their leader for the vigor with which she rallies them, instills confidence in them, and guides them to victory in the competition between choruses. In her first appearance in the text she is compared to a “sturdy and thunderous-hoofed” prizewinning racehorse among grazing herds (lines 46–48), an image of both energy and beauty that will recur in the fragment. Hagesikhora is also referred to as the trace horse to which the other horses on the team look

<sup>16</sup> We may well find that a certain aspect currently missing or not prominent in one song is actually given great emphasis in its missing part. As will be shown, complete devotion to the leader, a strong sense of collectivity, and a premium on competition are common to both songs.

<sup>17</sup> In fact, they seem to deliberately refrain from doing so. Almost as soon as Hagesikhora’s hair and face are mentioned with admiration, they stop and ask “Why do I tell you in open words?” (line 56), and then they move on to speak about another member of the chorus.

(line 92), and the matchups between her teammates and their opponents from another chorus are both spoken of as head-to-head contests between horses (lines 58–59) and as a battle (lines 60–63). In lauding Hagesikhora's leadership, the girls also evoke comparison with a ship where all the sailors must obey the pilot (lines 94–95).

In keeping with the athletic, military, and naval metaphors of the poem, the girls of the chorus express their attachment to Hagesikhora not so much in terms of the lover's soulful longing (as in the Astymeloisa song) as in terms of the guidance and assurance that followers constantly receive from their leader. In the next to last stanza (lines 85–89), for example, the girls appear helpless when they utter the wish to please the goddess of the festival, tell of the arduous preparations they have undergone, and confess the insufficiency of their skills (they self-deprecatingly compare their own singing to the screeching of an owl). Their leader saves them from frustration and makes their struggle worthwhile: "It was thanks to Hagesikhora that girls trod the path of lovely peace" (lines 90–91). Considering the dominance of athletic and military images in the poem, "lovely peace" should mean the gratification of achieving victory in the choral competition, and we see Hagesikhora standing at the end of the path leading to the victory, being surrounded by her adoring teammates.

The image of Hagesikhora as the girls' guardian spirit appears earlier in the song. In lines 64–76, as they recite the band's expensive ornaments and maidenly charms, the girls exhibit a lack of confidence about whether they can win the competition against their rival chorus:

For abundance of purple is not sufficient for protection, nor intricate snake of solid gold, no, nor Lydian headband, pride of dark-eyed girls, nor the hair of Nanno, nor again godlike Areta nor Sylakis and Kleesisera, nor will you go to Ainesimbrotas and say, "If only Astaphis were mine, if only Philylla were to look my way, or Damareta, or lovely Ianthemis."

This elaborate, breathless enumeration is made all the more impressive by the interjection: "No; it is Hagesikhora who guards me" (line 77).

It is almost at once both a sigh of relief and a thankful prayer. What precious ornaments and beauty and talent cannot achieve for the group, their captain can bring to it. How could the girls not admire Hagesikhora or look to her for reassurance, protection, and a fighting spirit? This interpretation of line 77 assumes, with Campbell, that on the papyrus is written "*tērei*" (guards) instead of "*teirei*" (wears down, distresses). As Campbell argues, besides orthographic grounds, *tērei*

gives a meaning consistent with the recurring battle metaphor;<sup>18</sup> in fact, it directly addresses the anxiety in the preceding lines about the lack of protection.

We should, however, also consider the other reading of *teirei*, which critics such as Bruno Gentili, Denys Page, and Charles Segal endorse. Translating the line as “Hagesikhora wears me down,” Segal holds that the girls are articulating erotic sentiments for their leader.<sup>19</sup> Page renders the line as “It is Hagesikhora for whom we pine.” He does not push for erotic implications but understands the lines as the girls’ expression of strong affection and dependence.<sup>20</sup> Of these two readings, that of Page fits, complements, and even reinforces the interpretation here based on a different deciphering of a key word in the papyrus. The emphasis on the image of Hagesikhora as their admired and respected leader does not rule out her exerting a strong sentimental influence on the girls, which indeed must be assumed to be integral to the deep attachment they consistently demonstrate toward her. There is little evidence in the extant fragment to indicate that such an emotional impact is in an erotic vein.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, we should perhaps remain open to that reading, both because of the incomplete state of the poem and because I believe that there was a strong link between erotic sentiments and the highly competitive homosocial experience in the Greek tradition.

The centrality of companionship in the Greek female choruses appears more interesting when we consider the possibility that choral members, selected from the same community, may often have been kin. In fact, the Louvre *Partheneion* points us in that direction. In line 52, when Hagesikhora’s name is mentioned for the first time, the chorus refers to her as “my cousin” (*anepsias*). With various degrees of certainty, critics agree that this may indicate that the girls are all blood relations. While Page takes it to be a fact, Campbell is more cautious and leaves

<sup>18</sup> Campbell (1982: 209n77).

<sup>19</sup> Segal (1989: 133–134). Gentili (1988: 73–77) argues that the “battle” in the poem takes place in a competition between Agido and the ordinary members of the chorus for the love of Hagesikhora. “Peace” comes when Hagesikhora satisfies Agido’s erotic passion. I find this reading unconvincing.

<sup>20</sup> As Page (1951: 63, 91) makes clear by repeatedly paraphrasing himself: “Our beauty and finery are not enough: it is Hagesikhora whose presence we need,” “Hagesikhora is all in all to us,” “all our hopes (of success) rest with Hagesikhora,” and “it is Hagesikhora upon whom all our affections are fixed.”

<sup>21</sup> It is not clear to me why, as Segal (1989: 133) believes, the listing of the girls’ charms in lines 64ff. has to have an erotic coloring. Praise of feminine beauty is such a standard theme of maiden songs that there must be a more explicit indication of eroticism, as is unmistakable in the Astymeloisa fragment, to make such a reading plausible.

open the possibility that *anepsias* may mean only a member of the same chorus, that is that (although he does not explicitly say so) it was used as a term of fictive kinship to describe the close relationship between the chorus members.<sup>22</sup>

It is clear that the celebration of companionship is all that the poem is about;<sup>23</sup> there is no inkling of the chorus members' common descent except for the single appearance of the word *anepsias*. If they are all really blood relations, the fact that from beginning to end the girls praise Hagesikhora's leadership in the chorus but utter no kinship-related sentiments suggests that the friendship cultivated through their common choral experience is what defines their ties regardless of the possible familial connections among them. Yet it would be equally interesting if *anepsias* is a term of fictive kinship borrowed to describe and "elevate" the friendship among the girls. It has been pointed out that the term *anepsias* here mirrors that which was used of members of the Spartan *agelē*, groups into which male children and adolescents were organized according to age-grades (ages 1–7, 8–14, 15–20) and were trained under a leader.<sup>24</sup> If there are indeed structural and functional parallels between the maidens' choruses and the young men's training groups, it suggests that women's choral performances were fully integrated into the civic life of the Spartan state. If the use of a fictive kinship term to refer to the female chorus members seemingly indicates that kinship rather than friendship is the better established and privileged human relation, its actual obscurity in the poem suggests that the language of kinship is invoked only to be "displaced" and reduced to "mere images of friendship."<sup>25</sup> In Part 1 I demonstrated that a community characterized by egalitarian competition and mutual attachment was the ideal form of Greek male sociability. Regardless of how real or thoroughgoing the analogy can be between the maidens' choruses and young men's *agelē* of Sparta, it seems clear that Alkman's maiden songs

<sup>22</sup> Page (1951: 67–68); Campbell (1982: 204n52). Segal (1989: 132) thinks that the term may indicate "a relationship of a cultic as well as a familial nature."

<sup>23</sup> That is, when it is done with the mandatory invocation of deities and the myth narrative.

<sup>24</sup> Calame (2001: 214–221); Perlman (1983: 129). For more on the Spartan *agelē*, see Scanlon (2002: 74–75).

<sup>25</sup> I borrow this insight from Halperin (1990: 85), who observes a paradox in the representations of heroic friendship in ancient Greek and Middle Eastern literatures: "Although their textual strategies make kinship and conjugality into privileged loci of signification for representing friendship, they also make friendship into a paradigm case of human sociality."

acknowledge and celebrate the independent role of companionship vis-à-vis kinship. For Spartan young women, choral participation seems to have cultivated strong bonds of friendship with competing peers, the same purpose that was fulfilled for Greek male youths through a wider range of activities.<sup>26</sup>

The age-mate relationship established in the women's choruses is also described as outlasting the choral experience to provide the basis for long-term friendship. According to the introductory note that Aristophanes of Byzantium (ca. 257–180 BCE) provides for Euripides' *Orestes*, the play's chorus consists of Elektra's age-mates (*helikiotidon*), who have come to inquire about the illness of her brother. In the play, upon desecrating the appearance of those women, Elektra observes, "Here they are again, my dear friends who sing with me in my laments."<sup>27</sup> Her remark reveals that her friends have consistently shown concern for her well-being through visits to her and expressions of sympathy. A clue to their common choral experience may be detected in Elektra's reference to her friends as those who "sing" with her in her laments (*thrēnēmasi sunodoi*).<sup>28</sup>

Another example of long-term age-mate companionship rooted in choral participation is provided by Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world. In the third book of the *Iliad*, Helen expresses regret for having eloped with Paris and triggering the Trojan War and remembers what she has forsaken: her marriage bed, her kinsmen, her child, and the "lovely comradeship of women my own age" (*homēlikiēn erateinēn*. *Iliad* 3.174–175). The list encompasses every important relationship in a woman's life, and it is impressive that female companionship should receive not only a mention but also a warm tribute ("lovely"). Helen's reference to her companions as her age-mates may suggest that choral experience, which is characterized by both cooperation and competition among the contemporary chorus members, formed the basis of bonds for which the fatally beautiful leader of her teammates yearns many years later. This reading finds support in the last choral song

<sup>26</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1995: 245–246) discusses the iconographical contrast between the young male in Greece and the much more restricted social persona of the maiden, noting that religion constituted the only sphere in which the latter could perform a social role outside the house.

<sup>27</sup> *Orestes* 132–133; Aristophanes of Byzantium's note in the M. L. West edition (1987: 61).

<sup>28</sup> In the Homeric poems the funeral song is accompanied by the exclamations of a chorus of women (Calame 2001: 82).



of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. Toward the end of that play, the chorus of Athenian women pays tribute to Helen and her youthful companions, calling Helen "the pure and comely chief of their chorus" (line 1315).<sup>29</sup> The captain-followers relationship between Helen and her choral companions is also at the center of Theokritos' (ca. 300–260 BCE) *Idyll* 18 ("Helen's Wedding Song"). While praising their leader's beauty, her weaving skills, and her musical talent, in a manner reminiscent of Alkman's maiden songs, the companions of Helen proudly present themselves thus, "We, all her companions (*sunomalikes*, age-mates), anointing ourselves as if men, / Compete in racing along the beaches of the Eurotas – / Four times sixty maidens, a youthful feminine band (*thēlus neolaia*) – / Not one of whom when matched against Helen is flawless" (lines 22–25; tr. Sargent 1982: 74). Helen appears in different guises in the Greek tradition. In her aspect as an adulterous wife she may be portrayed variously as a cunning femme fatale or an innocent victim of the gods' cruel schemes, but, remarkably, vis-à-vis her women associates she is always represented as a loyal companion and a beloved leader in her full radiance.<sup>30</sup>

It is tempting to regard Helen and her companions, invoked in hymns by Aristophanes and Theokritos and in the *Iliad*, as the ultimate exemplars of the Greek female band in all its competitiveness and solidarity. However, there is a passage in the *Odyssey* that compares a group of ball-playing Phaiakian girls to Artemis and her nymphs on the hunt:

As Artemis, who showers arrows, moves on the mountains  
either along Taygetos or on high-towering  
Erymanthos, delighting in boars and deer in their running,  
and along with her the nymphs, daughters of Zeus of the aegis,  
range in the wilds and play, and the heart of Leto is gladdened,  
for the head and the brows of Artemis are above all the others,  
and she is easily marked among them, though all are lovely,  
so this one shone among her handmaidens, a virgin unwedded.

(*Od.* 6.102–109; Lattimore 105)

In the same way that the Homeric bard sees parallels between Artemis' hunting band and the competitive ball game of the Phaiakian princess and her attendants,<sup>31</sup> perhaps the agonistic and close-knit young Greek women's choruses mirrored the deities they were formed to honor.

<sup>29</sup> This choral song will be discussed again later.

<sup>30</sup> Hughes (2005) examines the many facets of Helen's images in the Western tradition.

<sup>31</sup> Mandelbaum (1990: 118) translates *amphipoloisi* (line 109) as "comrades."

*Female Bonding and Sexual Rivalry*

Greek female choruses fell roughly into two classes according to the members' marital status,<sup>32</sup> and the agonistic spirit and enthusiasm for extrafamilial homosocial bonding that the choral experience had cultivated in Greek women from childhood onward continued to be with them after marriage. The combination of these two permanent qualities with the wives' newly gained sexual maturity and domestic power aroused male anxiety and found intriguing expression in literature. The three Aristophanic plays that will be examined in this section all have either direct or indirect connections in theme and plot to all-female or chiefly female festivals and evince comic yet also serious perceptions of women's solidarity and of the potential power of women's collective action.

In *Lysistrata*, the titular heroine organizes a pan-Hellenic sex strike of young wives and successfully forces the men of Athens, Sparta, and their allied states to stop the perennial war that they have been fighting. The plot is not directly related to any religious celebration, but in her opening remarks, on seeing that nobody has yet shown up for the mobilization meeting she has summoned, Lysistrata revealingly says that there certainly would have been a high turnout if the women had been called to participate in one of the orgiastic and predominantly female festivals (lines 1–3). In fact, later in the play, when a magistrate arrives with the police to arrest the sex strikers barricaded on the acropolis, the commotion raised by the women initially makes him suspect that they are celebrating the Adonia, a chiefly female festival (lines 388–398).<sup>33</sup> Both Lysistrata's disappointment and the magistrate's suspicion exhibit the comedian's mockery of women's stereotypical weakness for food and sex, but the point remains that the female or chiefly female festivals were the favorite events of women and could most effectively bring them together.

<sup>32</sup> Calame (2001: 26, 30).

<sup>33</sup> See Blundell (1995: 37–38) on the suspicion with which men tended to view the Adonia. Detienne (1994) suggests that there existed a structural contrast in the Greek imagination between the Adonia and the festivals in honor of Demeter. Whereas Adonia, whose participants were courtesans and concubines, were associated with seductive but sterile acts of sex, the festivals honoring Demeter, celebrated by lawful wives, affirmed the chaste and fertile marital life. Festivals dedicated to Demeter figure importantly in the fantastic Aristophanic plays about women who take collective action, political or otherwise. My reading of those plays points to another familiar structural contrast in Greek thinking about females, namely, the difference between maidens and married women. For a critique of Detienne's interpretation, including his classification of the celebrants of the Adonia and the Thesmophoria into opposing categories – courtesans/concubines versus wives – see Winkler (1990a: 197–202).

In Greece, there were no other legitimate occasions that allowed women to abandon their children and houses and enjoy leisure and the company of their peers outside the home for a prolonged period.<sup>34</sup>

This point is confirmed in two other Aristophanic plays whose central action either takes place during a female festival or can be traced to one. In *Women at the Thesmophoria*, the participants at a three-day, all-female festival honoring Demeter (the goddess of grain and fertility) set aside the festival's second day to decree a death sentence on Euripides, whose portrayals of women as adulteresses, filchers, and gluttons have made him the public enemy of Greek women.<sup>35</sup> The meeting at which this fictional joint resolution is passed proceeds according to the protocol of the Athenian Assembly, and the attending wives repeatedly speak of women as a group striving to defend their common interests, using the striking phrase "commonwealth of women."<sup>36</sup> The imitative parliament in this play is in real action in the play *Assemblywomen*, where the women carry out a plan that was hatched at the Skira, another all-female festival in honor of Demeter. As it goes, the female conspirators disguise themselves as men, infiltrate the assembly, and successfully pass a resolution that henceforth transfers the management of the state to women.

Female bonding and sexual rivalry, themes common to all three plays, are clearly visible in *Women at the Thesmophoria*, which employs the device of having a kinsman of Euripides disguise himself as a woman and infiltrate the gathering to challenge the women's verdict on the allegedly misogynistic tragedian. First through the kinsman's observation and later in the debate that involves him and the women, we hear the two sexes throw accusations at each other. However, the women doubtless win the day by virtue of their numbers and self-conscious solidarity, and men, represented by Euripides in absentia and his sympathetic kinsman, are doomed losers in the confrontation. The kinsman is uncovered and sentenced to death; eventually, he manages a narrow escape thanks to a clever plan devised by Euripides.

Despite an obvious paradox, the rituals and myths of the Thesmophoria and other all-female festivals honoring Demeter as the goddess of

<sup>34</sup> Henderson (1996: 22).

<sup>35</sup> Although the practices of other Greek cults often displayed local variations (e.g., in the time of observation or in the rites involved), the Thesmophoria was celebrated in much the same form by all Greeks (Mikalson 2004: 215).

<sup>36</sup> *Women at the Thesmophoria*, lines 307–308 (*ton dēmon tōn gunaikōn*) and 334–335 (*tōi dēmōi tōi tōn gunaikōn*). Henderson (1996: 109) renders it as "sovereign people of the women."

fertility embodied a serious questioning of wifehood and motherhood. According to the founding myth, Demeter roved the world in search of her missing daughter, Persephone, who, while picking flowers with her maiden playmates was kidnapped by Hades, the king of the underworld, to be his queen. When Demeter could not find the girl, she became enraged and withheld grains and fruits from the earth. Famine spread and people died in droves, until Zeus intervened to have Persephone reunited with her mother for two-thirds of the year and spend the rest of the year as consort of Hades.<sup>37</sup> In this story, marriage is presented as a violent rupture perpetrated by men, without initiation for the girl or preparation for the mother (and perhaps for the girl's playmates, too). Beyond the loss and frustration associated with women's experience of marriage, there is more to the profound lesson of the myth. Demeter's wrath demonstrates the tremendous power women hold because of their reproductive capacity, a power that in male perception enables women to avenge and destroy no matter how helpless they may appear in a world ruled by men. The outcome of the myth is not really a happy ending. Persephone's remaining in forced wedlock conveys no positive message about marriage, and Demeter's restoration of the earth's fertility seems to be only an unwilling compromise.

The Demeter-Persephone ("Twain Goddesses" as they were called) story was not simply a remote mythical background that had no bearing on the practice and meaning of festivals like the Thesmophoria. Ancient sources suggest that the rehearsal of the myth formed part of the core program on these occasions.<sup>38</sup> As we may imagine, when women gathered at the center of the city during the three days of the Thesmophoria and conducted celebrations that strictly excluded the participation of men (violations being punishable by death), the impact that this conspicuous yet mysterious collective female presence exerted on the male imagination must have been tremendous. Aristophanes' comic play may have brought out in a special way the anxiety aroused by the women who temporarily formed a city within the city during the festival. Whereas the plot about the infiltration of the disguised kinsman points to men's desire to penetrate the mystery surrounding the women's gathering, the stern treatment he receives following the easy uncovering of his identity bespeaks the futility of any such attempt. The kinsman gives himself away not only because he dares to cast aspersions on females to the outrage of

<sup>37</sup> The most important text about this myth is the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*.

<sup>38</sup> Brumfield (1981: 80–81); Lowe (1998).

his fellow celebrants but also because he simply has no knowledge of the ritual practices and interpersonal networks at the festival. For example, while claiming that he has been attending the festival every year, he is not able to answer the question of who his tent companion (*suskēnētria*) was (line 624). Apparently, during the festival two women would have been assigned to the same tent where they rested at night and perhaps also where some other activities were conducted. The confrontation between the kinsman and the women at the Thesmophoria shows that the all-female festivals were perceived as occasions conducive to cultivating women's solidarity and letting out sexual antagonism.

Knowing that the Thesmophoria actually might have been celebrated on the Pnyx, the usual site for the meeting of the real-life Athenian Assembly,<sup>39</sup> is important for an understanding of Aristophanes' other women-centered plays. *Lysistrata* begins with the women coming from all over Greece for a meeting that their ringleader has called to act on the war between the Athenians and the Spartans (and their respective allies). If it seemed to the Athenians that the female festivals were natural places for women to engage in gossip about and even machinations against their kinsmen (as in *Women at the Thesmophoria*), it took only a little more imagination to put politics on the agenda of the female celebrants. I say "agenda" because Aristophanes' heroines in the *Assemblywomen* and *Lysistrata*, like those in *Women at the Thesmophoria*, conduct their affairs in the manner of the men's assembly, from the procedure and rules of the gathering to the diction and rhetoric of the speeches. The fantastic plot about the women's invasion of the assembly in the *Assemblywomen* makes sense in view of the strong possibility that the Thesmophoria shared the venue of the Athenian Assembly in reality and in view of the general exclusion and secrecy of such all-female festivals: the women are returning to a gathering place that has actually belonged to them for three days each year.

Similarly, the seizure of the acropolis by the sex strikers in *Lysistrata* originated in actual religious practices and popular notions about female character and behavior associated with those practices. It is under the pretext of making a sacrifice to Athena that the older women occupy the citadel (lines 177–179), a move that proves crucial to Lysistrata's plan to force peace on the men by simultaneously staging a sex strike and cutting off the war funds (the Athenian treasury was located on the

<sup>39</sup> For the debates about whether the festival was held at the Pnyx, see MacDowell (1995: 259–260).

acropolis). Once again, Aristophanes takes his cue from the freedom that religious activities afforded Greek women and extends it to create a fantasy about women's political action.

Such fantasized action is impressive not only because of its scale but also because of the solidarity it reflects. Lysistrata twice uses the word *koinēi* (united) to describe the mission in which she and her comrades are engaged. In lines 39–41, in a conversation with the first woman who arrives at the meeting, her neighbor Kalonike, Lysistrata says, “If the wives come together here – those from Boeotia, those of the Peloponnesians, and ourselves – united we’ll save Greece” (Sommerstein 17). Later, to the magistrate who has come to denounce the women for their seizure of the acropolis, Lysistrata points out that they have acted thus because “there isn’t a man in the country” and “we women straight away decided to band together and unite to save Greece” (*Lysistrata* 524–526; Sommerstein 71). The consciousness and resolve of the leader is shared by her followers, who, for all the selfish motivations and trivial desires that they display from time to time, do join hands to carry out their momentous task. This can be seen in the episode in which the men are about to set fire to the women’s barricade on the acropolis and another group of women rush to their comrades’ aid with pitchers of water. Expressing concern for the fate of those besieged and describing the haste with which they have brought water from the crowded fountain house, the members of the rescue team call upon each other to fly to the scene to save their “women fellow citizens” (*taisin emais dēmotisin*) (*Lysistrata* 321–335; Sommerstein 51). The women’s pride and faith in their joint action comes forth in an antistrophe:

I am ready to go to any lengths  
Together with these women, because of their valour; for  
They have character, they have charm, they have daring,  
They have wisdom, and they have an intelligent  
Patriotic valour.

(*Lysistrata* 543–547; Sommerstein 73)

The idea of female solidarity is also emphasized in the *Assemblywomen*. Under the coaching of Praxagora, the women have learned the protocol of the assembly and gained an appreciation of the import of the action they will be taking. The choral ode they sing as they make their way to the assembly indicates their conscious unity:

Follow us, be quick,  
and take great care to avoid

striking any wrong note  
 in the display you've got to make.  
 And when we've got our tickets,  
 Then we must make sure  
 We sit close together,  
 So that we can vote to approve  
 all of the measures  
 our sisters (*philas*) may need –  
 only, what am I saying? I should  
 have called them our *brethren* (*philous*).

(*Assemblywomen* 293–299;

Sommerstein 65)

While being a joke about the impersonators' slipping back into their own selves, the last two lines also show the women reinforcing for one another their transformed identity. The women who are accustomed to making friends at the festivals now become male citizens who associate with one another in political deliberation and decision making in the assembly. Though there is some difficulty in this, they will succeed, because both roles are about group consciousness and peer competition.

The women in *Lysistrata* and the *Assemblywomen* also show themselves to be true bearers of the Hellenic agonistic spirit in the way they make the case for their action as they face the men who in amazement and anger attempt to vanquish the female intruders. The eloquent women base their intervention on three claims. The first is that they have the *responsibility* to do so. In *Lysistrata*, when the men attempt to take back the citadel and chide the women for going out of their way to talk about war, the invaders declare: "Here we begin, all you citizens, to deliver / advice that will benefit the city; / and rightly so, for she nurtured me in sumptuous splendour" (lines 638–640/1). They then list the functions that they have served at various public festivals, occasions that were both religious and civic and provided important legitimate opportunities for women to be seen in public spaces. It is to repay the representation and honors that they have received from the city, the women argue, that they have stepped forward on this occasion.<sup>40</sup>

The second argument that Aristophanes' women employ is that they are exercising their *right* in taking action about war and peace. In the

<sup>40</sup> This is the same passage mentioned twice earlier. As the leader of this female squad summarizes the speech of her comrades, "I owe it to the city to give her some good advice" (*Lysistrata* 648; Sommerstein 83).

sample speech given by Praxagora, she addresses the assembly thus, “I have as much of a stake in this country as you do; and I am vexed and grieved at the whole situation the City is in” (*Assemblywomen* 173–175; Sommerstein 57). What her stake consists of receives a full explanation in *Lysistrata*. As one woman says, “I have a stake in the common wealth: I contribute men to it” (*Lysistrata* 651; Sommerstein 83). Elsewhere, Lysistrata explains why women bear the burden of the war more than twice over: mothers send their sons to die in battles, wives are deprived of their conjugal life because their husbands are always in campaigns, and maidens grow old without men to marry them (*Lysistrata* 588–597). By thus refuting the men’s claim that women have nothing to do with the war, the female rebels establish their intervention as a right that they deserve.

Finally, the women also justify themselves by claiming that they have the *capability* to handle the affairs that men regard as a male preserve. The analogy between household and city management is central to their case. Praxagora says to the assembly that women should be asked to take over the city because “after all, we already employ them as managers and controllers of our households.”<sup>41</sup> She then demonstrates that, because of their experience in domestic management, women have better qualifications than men for governing the city. They are less likely to engage in reckless innovations, more concerned about people’s welfare, more efficient in supplying people’s needs, and more resourceful in dealing with financial crises. In *Lysistrata*, their argument takes the form of an extended metaphor in which Lysistrata tells the men that women can easily solve the serious problems faced by the Greek world just as if they were treating a tangled skein of wool. The first step is to cleanse bad men from the city just as dirt and burrs are removed from a fleece. Then the worthy – all those loyal to the city – will be gathered in and properly employed just as the good wool is carded into the basket for spinning and weaving (lines 574–586).

The women will do more than hold the men accountable for the troubles of the city and claim to have the ability, in fact, a superior ability, to intervene in state affairs. The sexual interaction that makes up the bulk of Aristophanes’ two plays is filled with conflict, which is direct and intense and assumes not only verbal but also physical form.

<sup>41</sup> *Assemblywomen* 211–212; Sommerstein 59. So in *Lysistrata* 494–495 (Sommerstein 65), when the magistrate utters an exclamation at the suggestion that the women will manage the money that they have seized from the acropolis, Lysistrata answers, “Why do you think that so strange? Don’t we manage the household finances for you already?”



A good example of the physical confrontation can be found in an episode in the *Assemblywomen* in which the women applaud the sample speech Praxagora has just finished but express concern about whether she will be able to stand her ground if her male addressees in the assembly become abusive toward her. Praxagora immediately relieves their concerns by demonstrating the fierce reaction she will give in each of the imagined situations. To verbal challenges she will shoot back with sharp words, and to the use of force she will respond with thrusts and knocks. Encouraged by her firm attitude, the women assure her that they will come to her defense should the police attempt to expel her by lifting her off the ground (*Assemblywomen* 245–261). Fortunately, later at the assembly neither Praxagora nor her comrades have to act as they are prepared to because their disguise is not discovered and Praxagora's eloquence succeeds in convincing the men that a female regime may well be worth trying as a last resort. However, it is clear that the women view themselves as being engaged in a battle, a point that is highlighted by the women's use of the title "General" (*stratēgon*, line 246) to describe Praxagora. Sommerstein comments that it may have been Aristophanes' design to "mislead spectators into expecting that the new feminine government will display an Amazon-like bellicosity."<sup>42</sup> If in the end no force is involved in the takeover and the men happily accept the communist rule introduced by the women, a battle certainly could have been the natural development of the invasion, which is exactly what happens in *Lysistrata*.

When in *Lysistrata* the men arrive at the acropolis intending to burn out the barricaded women, the besiegers make it clear that they are in a war as they pray to Athena Nike: "O Lady Victory, be thou with us, and may we set up a trophy over the women in the Acropolis and this present effrontery of theirs" (*Lysistrata* 317–318; Sommerstein 49). Henceforth the two sides will be engaged in a head-on physical confrontation, and what the women in the *Assemblywomen* say they are prepared to do but in the end do not need to carry out is here enacted onstage. Matching the men's prayer to Lady Victory, the women appeal to Athena, the patron deity of Athens and a warlike goddess, asking her to be their "fellow fighter" (*summachon*). Under the sign of the goddess (the acropolis being the location of Athena's temple), the women first put out the fire that the men have set, and then they repel the archers who were ordered to seize them and tie them up, both amid fast exchanges of

<sup>42</sup> Sommerstein (1998: 160n246).

verbal abuse and threats (line 35off.). Frustrated by the setback, the magistrate calls on the archers to fall into line and make another charge because “we must never let ourselves be beaten by women” (*Lysistrata* 450–451; Sommerstein 61). Lysistrata responds to this desperate attempt by pointing out that on her side there are “four whole companies of fully armed fighting women” (*tettares lochoi machimōn gynaiḱōn exōplismenōn*) (*Lysistrata* 453–454; Sommerstein 61). At her call, a squad of women in hoplite armor come running out of the acropolis, ready to execute their leader’s commands to drag, hit, thump, and revile their enemies. The men are routed, and Lysistrata tells the woeful magistrate that he had been wrong if he thought he was coming to fight some slave girls (*Lysistrata* 459–460, 464; Sommerstein 61, 63).

These descriptions of armed conflict between the men and women in *Lysistrata* should not be regarded merely as slapstick. In the first place, they invoke a deep anxiety about the aggressive female band. The men are later to compare their opponents to Artemisia, the queen of Halikarnassos who led a fleet to aid Persia in the Persian War of 480 BCE, and to the Amazons, the mythological female warriors who once attacked Athens (one of the battles took place by the Pnyx) but suffered defeat at the hands of the legendary king Theseos.<sup>43</sup> As the leader of the men warns, should the women get the chance, they would not hesitate to wage a war against men, which the women would win because of their determination and skill (*Lysistrata* 671–681; Sommerstein 85).<sup>44</sup> Tellingly, just as the men fear the power of the bonding of the female aggressors, they buck themselves up by drawing on the example of Harmodios and Aristogeiton, whose statues stood in the Athenian agora. Quoting from a drinking song that celebrates the heroic deed of the couple (discussed in Chapter 1) and posing like the statue of Aristogeiton, the men’s leader vows, in the spirit of the two exemplary

<sup>43</sup> The Amazons take war as their profession, run their own government exclusive of men, and kill their sons at birth (in some accounts they mutilate the boys). Men perform only menial jobs in the kingdom of the Amazons, who manage to perpetuate their race by having children with strangers. DuBois (1982), Lefkowitz (1986, ch. 1), and Tyrell (1984) examine images of the Amazons in Greek sources. For the legend of the Amazons’ attack on Athens, see Plutarch, *Theseos* 27.

<sup>44</sup> The fear of women’s collective force enabled in a religious context finds grim expression in Euripides’ tragedy *Bakkhai*, in which the maenads, who roam the mountains in a Dionysiac trance, refuse to obey the king’s order to disband and return home; instead, they annihilate the troops that the king sends and eventually prevail over him. The play makes extensive use of the imagery of physical battles. See Benson (1995) and Dodds (1951: 270–280) for discussions of the maenads in Greek mythology, literature, and art.

lovers and freedom fighters, to defeat the female aggressors (lines 631–634). It seems that the violation of gender norms is as abhorrent and unbearable as tyranny is, and that this is a most appropriate occasion for the Athenian men once again to be inspired by the couple who exemplified with their lives the preciousness of the male homosocial bonds that held together a civic community.

Furthermore, underlying the fantastic portrayal of a sexual battle in *Lysistrata* is a logical connection made between two things: the temporary freedom and empowerment enjoyed by women in religious activities, and women's presumed desire to redress the injustice they suffer in daily life. Complaining of how women used to be silenced and chastised when they questioned their husbands about the decisions being made in the assembly, Lysistrata firmly tells the magistrate that, now that her forces have captured the acropolis, "If you'll be prepared to *listen in your turn* (*antakroasthai*) to our good advice, and if you'll *keep quiet in your turn* (*antisiōpan*) as we had to, we can put you back on the right path" (*Lysistrata* 527–528; Sommerstein 71; emphases added). Seeking to redress the prior unjust deprivation of a right, the self-identified victims of the deprivation demand to have their turn and to subject their former masters to the same unjust treatment. Such rivalry informs the women's rebellion in the *Assemblywomen*, too, albeit manifested in a more moderate form. In that play, as the women vote themselves into government, the men are notified that from now on they will be relieved of all the rights – and also obligations, to sweeten the deal, as it were – that they used to enjoy (or to owe, in the case of obligations). Generally speaking, the men will stay at home, whereas their wives will attend the assembly and the court (*Lysistrata* 458–464). A more specific legal change also emerges: no man will now have the power to make a contract in excess of the value of a bushel, which is a reversal of the actual Athenian law that restricts women's and children's right to enter into contracts (*Lysistrata* 1024–1025). In making the argument that "We are in no way inferior; it is our turn to rule and your turn to be ruled," the women sound irrefutable and even persuasive because they are simply appropriating for themselves the logic of Athenian democracy (where all male adult citizens are equal and take turns in ruling and being ruled) and because they have shown themselves to possess all the virtues and abilities necessary for political participation.

Both the *Assemblywomen* and *Lysistrata* end on delightful notes. In the *Assemblywomen*, the communist policy of the new female regime has turned the entire city into a banquet hall, where the women oversee the

feast and all men are invited to enjoy their fill. The next-to-last choral song, which mainly consists of a compound of food items, effectively brings out the festive atmosphere:

Because on the table there may be a  
 Dishy-slicy-sharky-dogfishy-  
 Heady-left-oversy-very-strong-saucy-  
 Silphiumy-bit-salty-honey-poured-over-  
 Thrush-upon-blackbirdy-ringdovey-pigeony-  
 Chickeny-roast-cooty-wagtail-  
 Rockdovey-haremeaty-boiled-winy-dippy-  
 Deliciousy-winged thing! So you listen to that  
 And get yourself a plate, quick and fast,  
 Then raise the dust—but take  
 Some porridge to dine on.

(*Assemblywomen* 1169–1178;  
 Sommerstein 135)

*Lysistrata* likewise ends in peace, feasting, and dancing. The women's sex strike successfully forces the men to yield to their demand to stop the war. As the ithyphallic Spartan and Athenian men rush to the acropolis, where the women are still barricaded, *Lysistrata* works out a truce agreement between the two parties. The reconciliation is not just a political and military one made between the contentious states. Significantly, it is also meant to take place between the two sexes that have engaged in a pitched battle for most of the play. Treating the Spartans and Athenians to a feast that the women have arranged on the acropolis, *Lysistrata* makes the men take their wives back. The speech she delivers while overseeing the return of the wives appeals for sexual reconciliation: "Let man stand beside wife and wife beside man, and then in celebration of these happy events let us dance in honor of the gods, and for the future take care never to make the same mistake again!" (*Lysistrata* 1275–1278; Sommerstein 149). There seems to be a double entendre in the phrase "make mistake" (*examartanein*). While its obvious reference is to the perennial war caused by the men's stupidity and greed, it almost certainly also bears on the hostilities between the men and women in the play. At *Lysistrata*'s bidding, the husbands and wives pair off in couples and dance the play to its end. With the resolution of the sexual rivalry that both gave rise to and energized the women's rebellion, the wives are returned to the home. If we recall that the women earlier made their case on the basis of their skills in household management, we must agree that the women's political action in the end confirms and

reinforces the old gender roles.<sup>45</sup> That is, after enjoying the spotlight briefly as dominant protagonists and brilliant political counselors, the women retire to the background in a way that restores the disrupted boundaries between male / political and female / domestic.

The ending of the *Assemblywomen* constitutes a different scenario. The women have actually just started exercising their rule in the city after taking over from the men. Although Aristophanes closes with the festivities that mark the beginning of a new regime and shows the women preparing the banquets to entertain men (in their traditional domestic role, that is), the closure may not be so easy to come by. What will gender relations be like from now on? If the women's rebellion was motivated by a sense of injustice at their exclusion from politics and a sense of disaffection with the men's performance, will the men, after enjoying the initial euphoria of the communist utopia, readily accept the disfranchised status now imposed on them? How will the women carry themselves when they return from the assemblies and court hearings to face the husbands they have overthrown?

Although less pressing, a feeling of unfinished business also hovers over the ending of *Lysistrata*. Returning home with their husbands, the women vow not to "make the same mistake again" (line 1278), but the sexual rivalry that dictated the plot does not go away. The reconciled men and women singing and dancing at the end of the play give us one last, full look at the agonistic and collective spirit that the female rebels have manifested throughout the play's mighty sexual confrontation. As expressed at the close of the final choral song:

Step, hey!  
 Prance lightly, hey!  
 That we may hymn Sparta,  
 Which delights in dances in honour of the gods  
 And in the stamp of the feet,  
 And where beside the Eurotas  
 The maidens prance  
 like fillies, raising clouds  
 of dust with their feet,  
 and their hair bobs  
 like the hair of bacchants who sport and ply the thyrsus;  
 and they are led by Leda's daughter [i.e., Helen],  
 the pure and comely chief of their chorus.

<sup>45</sup> Konstan (1993); MacDowell (1995: 248): "In fact in this play (unlike *Women at the Assembly* some twenty years later) the women do not take political power or action." The different case of the other play will be discussed later.

But come, make your hand into a band for your hair, and let  
 your feet leap  
 Like a hind, and clap your hands as well to help the dance along,  
 And sing in praise of the all-vanquishing goddess, the Lady  
 of the Bronze House.

(*Lysistrata* 1302–1321; Sommerstein 151, 153)

This choral ode to women's beauty, athleticism, pride, and camaraderie in *Lysistrata* is worthy of the maiden songs by Alkman and finds more echoes in works that go back to Homer and down through Hellenistic times. The agonistic and collective ethos of the songs celebrating the young women's choruses finds a counterpart in the sexual rivalry in plays set against married women's festive activities. While there is a shift from the adoration of the maidens to a mixture of fascination and anxiety about the wives and mothers, the common elements between the two groups remain unchanged and the women who earlier captured the Athenian acropolis and staged a pan-Hellenic sex strike and those who now dance with their husbands and sing a spirited and enchanting choral ode are the same. We recall that the female intruders on the acropolis did in fact invoke their longtime participation in civic festivals to refute the men's challenge to their intervention in state affairs. It seems that, although Aristophanes introduces a charming ending, he does not mean his audience to believe that the publicly staged battle in the play has really brought about a fundamental change in either side of the combatants. As they dance off the stage in high spirits, we cannot but wonder whether the *agon* between the two sexes has been settled once and for all. We shall have more occasions to observe such *agon* in a different setting in the next chapter and on the strength of evidence from a wider range of times, places, and genres, but now let us turn to women's presence in the Chinese festivals.

### Chinese Public Festivals

It is inevitable for human beings to believe in ghosts and spirits, hence the need for occasions to accommodate such inclinations, reasoned the philosopher Mozi (ca. 468–378 BCE). To illustrate his argument, Mozi mentions the immense popularity enjoyed by the well-known festivals in four Chinese states: Yan (north), Qi (east), Song (central), and Chu (south). According to the philosopher's one-sentence characterization

of these celebrations, they all “attracted men and women to follow upon one another to the spectacle.”<sup>46</sup>

Throughout ancient China, women participated in many festivals that took place in open spaces and involved the whole community. The timing of these festivals was often in keeping with the agrarian cycle. Ensuring the fertility of humans and of the land occupied a prominent role in the rituals, but communication with the divine also addressed other important concerns about life and death. The favorite venues for the gatherings appear to have been riverbanks, groves, and places that feature both hills and water. Men and women, old and young, all took part and enjoyed themselves, but marriageable young men and women probably experienced the greatest excitement. A song from the *Odes*, Ode 95 (“Zhen Wei,” The Zhen and Wei), describes one such celebration:

When the Zhen and Wei  
Are running in full flood  
Is the time for men and women  
To fill their arms with scented herbs.  
The woman says, “Have you looked?”  
The man says, “Yes, I have finished looking.”  
“Shall we go and look a little more?  
Beyond the Wei  
It is vast and full of delight.”  
Ah man and woman,  
Merrily they sport,  
And one gives the other a peony.<sup>47</sup>

(Cheng and Jiang 260–263;  
Waley 76)

According to Zhu Xi and the Han (the surname, not the dynasty) commentarial tradition that he followed, the background of the preceding poem was a spring festival in which the people of Zheng came to the two rivers that flow through the area and conducted rituals that had two purposes. One was to summon and appease the souls of the dead, and the other was to dispel the evil influences that were likely to be disturbed as the earth awoke with the advent of spring.<sup>48</sup> If the rites

<sup>46</sup> 此男女之所屬而觀也。Mozi, “Ming gui” (Elucidating Matters about Spirits), 8.4a.

<sup>47</sup> Cheng and Jiang 260–263; Waley 76. The second stanza of the poem contains slight variations in lines 2 ([Zhen and Wei] / Run deep and clear) and 4 ([Men and women] / Fill the grounds in crowds).

<sup>48</sup> Zhu Xi, *SJZ* 4.28b–29a. Zhu followed the reading of Xue Han, the leading proponent of the Han commentarial tradition on the *Odes* in the first century CE. Yao Jiheng (*ST*

for the dead and the apotropaic rituals were the major purposes of the festival, they were not all it was about. As can be seen in the poem, filling the riverbanks are crowds who attend with an eye to pleasure, not the least of which will come from the flirtations and amorous encounters between the young men and women in attendance. In the exchange dramatized in the poem, the woman eagerly invites the man, who has just returned from the celebrations, to take another trip, and he apparently does not need much persuasion to go along. The offering of a peony, a token of love, at the end of this minidrama echoes the bearing of the apotropaic orchis (line 4) and points to the coexistence of the religious purposes of these festivals and the opportunities the gatherings provided for socializing between the sexes. Poems like Ode 95 furnished much of the grounds for Zheng's reputation as a state with lively festivals and unrestrained sexual customs.<sup>49</sup>

Scholars such as Marcel Granet (1884–1940), Guo Moruo (1892–1978), Wen Yiduo (1899–1946), and Xiao Bing have argued that the socializing function of a festival was not merely the appendage of a religious occasion but was integral to the sexual rites that were at the center of many of the ancient festivals that celebrated fecundity. As these scholars would have it, courtship took place at those festivals amid song and dance by young men and women, and often ended with sexual union.<sup>50</sup> Ode 48 (“Sang zhong,” In the Mulberry Grove), for example, seems to lend itself to such an interpretation:

Where do I gather the dodder?  
In the village of Mei.  
Of whom do I think?  
Of lovely Meng Jiang.  
She waits for me in the mulberry grove,  
She invites me to go to Upper Palace.  
Alas, she bids me farewell on the banks of Qi.

5.163) and Chen Qiyuan (*MJB* 5.26a) point out Xue Han's influence on Zhu Xi in the interpretation of Ode 95.

<sup>49</sup> Two more poems from Zheng will be discussed later. Quoting Ode 95 and another song from Zheng, Ban Gu connects the numerous festivals in Zheng with its “licentious” customs (*HS* 1652). Classical commentaries on Ode 95 fell largely into two camps, one taking the ode to be an expression of the “licentious men and women” of Zheng (represented by Zhu Xi) and the other reading it as the poet's criticism of the state's “licentious sexual customs” (represented by the Mao-Zheng-Kong tradition). See Kern (2007: 136–140) on some early medieval interpretations that do not adopt a moralizing approach to songs like Ode 95.

<sup>50</sup> Granet (1975: 41–46); Guo Moruo (1931: 21); Wen Yiduo (1959: 97–113); Xiao Bing (1982: 145). In his commentary on Ode 95, Zheng Xuan observes that the man and woman “perform [a] conjugal act” before they part from each other (*MSZ* 346).



Where do I gather goosefoot?  
 To the north of Mei.  
 Of whom do I think?  
 Of lovely Meng Yi.  
 She waits for me in the mulberry grove.  
 She invites me to go to Upper Palace.  
 Alas, she bids me farewell on the banks of Qi.

Where do I gather charlock?  
 To the east of Mei.  
 Of whom do I think?  
 Of lovely Meng Yong.  
 She waits for me in the mulberry grove.  
 She invites me to go to Upper Palace.  
 Alas, she bids me farewell at the mouth of River Qi.  
 (Cheng and Jiang 131–136; my translation)

Usually considered a love song in modern criticism, Ode 48 does not appear to be the expression of sentiments directed at a specific woman (note the reference to a different female name in each stanza) but would fit the circumstances of the public festivals in which groups of young men and women engage in sexual bantering through the exchange of songs.<sup>51</sup> The repetition of the same place names (mulberry grove, Upper Palace, and River Qi) may point to the location of the festival.<sup>52</sup> Sun Zuoyun argues that Upper Palace refers to a temple structure erected in the mulberry grove for the Goddess of Fertility.<sup>53</sup>

I am not sure to what extent the sexual mixing at the ancient Chinese festivals was related to the alleged performance of fertility rituals, but suffice it to say that the religion-based festivals furnished opportunities for extensive sexual mixing. For example, the background of Ode 48 seems to be a festival that witnesses much merrymaking and courtship leading up to the formation of pairs, regardless of whether these unions are part of the festival's religious purposes. Ode 137 ("Dong men zhi fen," Elms of the Eastern Gate), a song from the state of Chen that Ban Gu, the Han historian, quotes to illustrate that the Chen people were

<sup>51</sup> Granet (1932: 84–86, 89) understands Ode 48 as an example of the songs that men and women improvised at rural festivals.

<sup>52</sup> Sanglin, the location Mozi names for the Song festivals, means "mulberry grove," which recalls the central site invoked in Ode 48 ("In the Mulberry Grove"). Since Song and Wei (the region of Ode 48's origin) occupied land that used to be under the direct rule of the Shang dynasty (16th–11th century BCE), both states observed similar festivals at similar locations (Guo Moruo 1931: 20; Wen Yiduo 1959: 97; Xiao Bing 1982: 145).

<sup>53</sup> Sun Zuoyun (1966: 305).

fond of rites conducted to entertain the gods (*HS* 1653), shows men and women reveling at a festival. In the first stanza of the poem, a group of young men are dancing in the sacred grove:

Elms of the Eastern Gate,  
Oaks of the Hollow Mound.<sup>54</sup>  
The sons of the Zizhong  
Trip and sway beneath them.

In the next stanza, a group of women come onto the stage:

It is a lucky morning, hurrah!  
The Yuan girls from the southern side  
Instead of twisting their hemp,  
In the market trip and sway.

Dancing in the market and making their way to the sacred grove,<sup>55</sup> the women are shown to be enjoying themselves in the same way as the men (both “trip and sway”). The fact that the poet makes a point of stating that the girls have given up spinning to dance on this day may suggest that, as in Greece, Chinese festivals offered women major opportunities to temporarily abandon domesticity and avail themselves of collective pleasure in public. The poem ends at the sacred place where young men and women meet and mingle, and it provides a delightful snapshot of the exchange between one of the many couples engaged in courtship. For that man and woman who may or may not be meeting for the first time, their banter involves the expression of affection and admiration and a demand for testimony of love:

It is a fine day at last!  
“Let us go off to join the throng.”  
“You are lovely as the mallow.”  
“Then give me a handful of pepper seed!”<sup>56</sup>  
(Cheng and Jiang 364–367;  
Waley 108)

<sup>54</sup> Whereas Zheng Xuan states merely that the first two lines evoke two places in Chen where men and women gather together (*MSZ* 376), Mou Ting (1759–1832) convincingly points out that the elms and the oaks refer to the sacred groves and that the festival activities there are what attract the crowds of men and women (*SQ* 1159).

<sup>55</sup> Zhu Xi (*SJZ* 7.3a) suggests that the women will meet the men later on. This reading is logical because the next stanza presents the men and women engaged in romantic exchanges.

<sup>56</sup> The gender of the subject in line 3 of the first stanza (子仲之子, which could mean “child (children) / son (sons) / daughter (daughters)” of the Zizhong) has had various

That sexual latitude may have been an important reason for the great appeal of the ancient Chinese festivals receives some support from the commentaries generated by a report in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the official history of Lu that covers the period 722–481 BCE. In 671 BCE, Duke Zhuang of Lu (r. 693–663 BCE) went to Qi to observe a celebration in honor of the God of Soil, which, it should be pointed out, happened to be one of the four famous festivals Mozi characterized as drawing large crowds of men and women.<sup>57</sup> All three early commentaries on the *Annals* hold that Duke Zhuang's trip was "against the rites 非禮" or "unusual 非常."<sup>58</sup> *Guliang's Commentary*, believed to be the latest of the three,<sup>59</sup> explains that Duke Zhuang misbehaved in crossing the borders to watch the women at the festival. Among the many later classical critics who supported the opinion of *Guliang's Commentary*, Hui Shiqi (1671–1741) made the strongest link between the Qi celebration and similar ancient festivals in other states. Citing both Mozi and Ode 95, Hui comments that Duke Zhuang attended the celebration with his mind not on the gods but just on the female participants.<sup>60</sup>

If we accept the interpretation of the classical commentators, what could Duke Zhuang have expected to enjoy when he went to the Qi festival? An anecdote in Sima Qian's (ca. 145–90 BCE) *Records of the Grand Historian* offers insight into what could have happened on a similar occasion. The narrator of the anecdote, a fourth-century BCE wise figure from Qi, describes what he saw during a community festival. According

interpretations. Waley's translation follows the Mao-Zheng-Kong interpretation (MSZ 376) in rendering "sons," whereas Karlgren's (1950: 88) translation "the daughter of Zizhong" is based on Zhu Xi (SJZ 7.2a) and Wang Xianqian (SYJ 10.2). Zhu Xi also understands line 2 of the second stanza differently, reading "yuan 原" not as a surname but as "plain field" (the line would accordingly be translated as "we go to the southern plain"). Despite the divergent readings of these two lines, the major commentaries agree that the song describes men and women enjoying themselves and engaging in amorous encounters in a public gathering (as is made clear in the last stanza).

<sup>57</sup> Chow (1978: 32) observes that "there seems to be no doubt that the *she* (where sacrifices to the God of Soil were offered) must have originally been connected with a type of worship concerned with fecundity and fertility." Also see M. E. Lewis (2006b: 134–137) and Si Weizhi (1997: 47) on the same connection.

<sup>58</sup> *Zuo's Commentary* (Zhuang 23, Yang 225–226); *Gongyang's Commentary* (Zhuang 23, 2237); *Guliang's Commentary* (Zhuang 23, 2386).

<sup>59</sup> Although its proponents in the Han claimed that it had been directly transmitted by one of Confucius' disciples in the fifth century BCE, and although it could indeed have had its origins in the pre-Qin period, there is wide suspicion that it was very much an early Han product (Cheng 1993: 67–71).

<sup>60</sup> Xiao Bing (1982: 146).

to his account, men and women at the festival engaged in activities that otherwise would have been prohibited: they sat together, played games, drank, became companions, and made eye and physical contact (*Shiji* 3199). There is no indication that the occasion described was the Qi celebration in honor of the Gods of Soil and Grain, but the convivial scenes the narrator depicts help shed light on the sexual license that marked that renowned festival. It could have happened that, tempted by the prospect of a sexual orgy, Duke Zhuang of Lu journeyed to attend the festival in the neighboring state, to the dismay of later moralists interested in upholding sexual propriety and the responsibilities of rulers.

In the *Odes*, women are often depicted as playing an active or even an aggressive role in sexual interactions at festivals, as can be seen in two of the poems discussed earlier. In Ode 95, the woman successfully persuades the man to accompany her to the festival, and we may well imagine that she will continue to use her charms on her companion as the two merge into the festive crowd and fully enjoy the collective sexual license. And again, in Ode 48, it is the woman who takes the initiative in arranging the couple's activities. She makes the first contact, suggests where they might go, and finally sees the man off after their tryst. We may understand the ascription of the overtures to the women in these poems as male coquetry aimed at teasing and seduction. However, there is no lack of songs that seem to have been sung by female festival participants in which the women confidently challenge their potential suitors to a game of love. Ode 87 ("Qian shang," Gird Your Loins), another song from Zheng, offers a good example:

If you tenderly love me,  
Gird your loins and wade across the Zhen;  
But if you do not love me –  
There are plenty of other men,  
Of madcaps maddest, Oh!

If you tenderly love me,  
Gird your loins and wade across the Wei.  
But if you do not love me,  
There are plenty of other gentlemen,  
Of madcaps maddest, Oh!

(Cheng and Jiang 245–246;  
Waley 72)

In Ode 87, the references to the Zhen and the Wei, the two rivers named in Ode 95 that provide the sites of the spring festival in Zheng, and the central presence of sexual bantering similar to that in Ode 95,

suggest that the same festival may have been the context for both odes. The addressee in Ode 87 does not have to be a lover with whom the speaker already has an established relationship, but can be any male youth at the festival. The rendezvous invitation stands as a challenge, as the woman points out to the youth that she can immediately cast her sight on many finer candidates if he is not forthcoming.<sup>61</sup>

Exhibiting a similarly confident and jocular attitude is the speaker in Ode 84 ("Shan you fu su," The Nutgrass Still Grows on the Hill), also from Zheng:

The nutgrass still grows on the hill;  
On the low ground the lotus flower.  
But I do not see Zidu;  
I only see this madman.

On its hill the tall pine stands;  
On the low ground the prince's-feather.  
But I do not see Zichong;  
I see only a mad boy.

(Cheng and Jiang 240–242;  
Waley 70)

The trees on the hill and the plants in the swamp may be interpreted on two levels. First, they indicate the geographical setting of the festival, which takes place at the foot of a hill and by a body of water. Second, they stand in a metaphorical relationship (high vs. low) to the contrast that the female speaker posits between the ideal lover she expects to find (represented by the generic names for handsome men, Zidu and Zichong) and the youth who presents himself.<sup>62</sup> The poem conjures up an amusing scene in which the woman assumes an air of disappointment and pride as she attempts to put off the lad who approaches her with such great confidence. The outcome of this interesting courtship episode is not known – the woman's disappointment with the candidate may have been affected or may have been genuine – but the enactment of many similar episodes with women at their centers may have significantly accounted for the expansive joviality of the festivals.

As has been suggested, the courtship-oriented verbal exchanges between men and women in poems such as Odes 84, 87, and 137 could have been expressed in song. Drawing on evidence from some ethnic

<sup>61</sup> Zhu Xi (*SJZ* 4.23a–b), Chen Zizhan (1983: 265–266), and Yu Guanying (1990: 88) read Ode 87 along these lines.

<sup>62</sup> Zhu Xi (*SJZ* 4.21b–22a) reads the poem as a "licentious" woman's teasing of her lover.

minority groups in modern China, Granet argues that many love songs in the *Odes* were created during the musical contests held at the festivals.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, it is not difficult to imagine the lively female participants at the festivals, such as the women in Odes 48, 84, 87, and 95, mocking and outdoing their male partners as they engage each other not only in conversations but also in song competitions and other festival activities. In the “great rivalry” (Granet’s phrase)<sup>64</sup> that energizes the assembly of young women and men at the ancient Chinese festivals, women appear as anything but constricted and submissive beings during the extensive sexual mixing.

A comparison is immediately invited between women’s literary presence at the Chinese festivals and what is shown in Greek literature. One contrast that jumps to the eye is that the Greek celebration of the female bonding that is rooted in agonistic festival experience, be it expressed as eroticism or as camaraderie, is unique to the Greek tradition. A certain Greek song (e.g., Alkman’s Louvre *Partheneion*) may focus on camaraderie, on how chorus members rally behind a charismatic and resourceful leader to win a battle, and another (e.g., Alkman’s other *Partheneion*) may lean toward eroticism, on how the leader charms her teammates and guides them to conquer their rivals. But in either case, the intense emotional attachment that ties the group together occupies the center of the picture. It would be difficult to pin down the nature of this attachment by separating out the two strains of sentiment that may well coexist but receive different emphases depending on the circumstances. However, the women’s age-mate experience in festivals that the Greeks celebrate is completely absent in the Chinese sources. The young women who frolic at the Chinese festivals shine as individuals, never as members of a group that has a competitive ethos on the one hand and shared goals and emotional experiences on the other hand.

In the same connection, the depiction of sexual interaction at the Chinese festivals focuses on courtship between the male and female celebrants, and their “contests of courtesy” (again, Granet’s phrase)<sup>65</sup> are of a different kind from the sexual rivalry that underlies Aristophanes’ representations of the all-female Greek festivals. In place of the anxiety occasioned by a perceived threat from female solidarity (even though such unity could be used for the good of men and of the entire civic

<sup>63</sup> Granet (1932: 190–206). Among the poems already discussed, Ode 137 is believed by Granet (1932: 42, 118) to contain explicit indications of antiphonal songs.

<sup>64</sup> Granet (1932: 128).

<sup>65</sup> Granet (1932: 215).

community, as the Aristophanic rebels claim), a concern with the dangers of sexual license was common to Chinese moralistic reactions to the festivals. Instead of maintaining a regular institutional basis for the fostering of women's extradomestic networks, Chinese festivals may have suffered the impact of an institutionalizing process that steadily established the central ritual status of the patrilineal family and led to an impoverishment of the celebrations (measured by a reduction in their variety, colorfulness, and importance in people's lives).<sup>66</sup>

According to a famous tradition presumably dating back to the early Western Zhou, the king set aside spring festivals for single men and women to engage in courtship and to contract marriages of their own will.<sup>67</sup> The festivals in question, let it be noted, were taken by classical critics to be the background for many pieces in the *Odes* that depict sexual interactions in a convivial atmosphere. Of course, both the commentators on the *Odes* and the transmitters of the tradition who compiled *The Rituals of Zhou* understood the king's decree as an expression of royal concern for the welfare of his people. On this view, the festivals were organized to create socializing opportunities so that the youths in the kingdom would be able to marry and raise families. Behind such a rationalization may be the Western Zhou state's double-headed effort to "tame" the ancient festivals. On the one hand, asserting its interest in festival activities and relating them directly to the people's welfare, the state steadily assumed control over those unofficial mass occasions, with the aim of making them serve the needs of the institutions of marriage and family.<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, the state attempted to promote

<sup>66</sup> In his study of the *Odes*, Granet (1932: 237) argues that the ancient festivals were "dis-membered" and "reduced to a clutter of rites" alongside the development of ancestor worship.

<sup>67</sup> This tradition is preserved in the *Rituals of Zhou* (*Zhouli*, 733). There is great controversy about the date of the compilation of this text; dates ranging from the Western Zhou to the Western Han have been suggested. Although the late Warring States period seems to be the most plausible, and the text clearly conflates materials from different periods, this multilayered work also reveals a profound knowledge of the ritual and administrative practices of much earlier times, including the Western Zhou (see Kern 2009b on the offices of writing and reading in the *Rituals of Zhou*). Whether the tradition under discussion is authentic or not does not affect the validity of the contrasting Chinese and Greek representations of women's festival activities that I have identified. Bodde (1975, ch. 10) and M. E. Lewis (2006b: 134–137) discuss the Warring States and Han evidence on the existence of both a state-sponsored and a popular cult devoted to matching up couples and promoting fertility.

<sup>68</sup> According to the king's decree, authorities (i.e., the Match-making Functionaries in the Earth Office) must make sure that the festivals fulfill their designated purposes and that the unions formed on those occasions are recognized. Lu Yun (1990) has

religious practices that defined the patrilineal family as the foundation of society and sanctified women's role and power in the domestic sphere. The scarcity of sources makes it very difficult to trace how (or whether) the ongoing "civilizing" influence brought about a gradual decline of the festivals, but there is incontrovertible evidence on the supreme attention devoted to ancestor worship, the Chinese domestic religion par excellence, in the extant early sources.<sup>69</sup>

Of the dual effort just posited, one aspect – containing the sexual energies of the festivals within the ambit of marriage – is reminiscent of the marriage control function that has been argued for the choruses of young Greek women that performed under public scrutiny.<sup>70</sup> However, the other aspect – the promotion of a governing religious ideology that has the family at its center – distinguishes the Chinese tradition.

### Chinese Domestic Rites

The performance of ancestral sacrifices registered the transitions between the major stages in a Chinese woman's life cycle. An unmarried girl had no real role in ancestral rites, because ancestor worship celebrated the perpetuation and prosperity of the agnatic descent group. Upon her marriage, a woman became a member of her husband's descent group, thereby assuming a formal role in ancestor worship in the capacity of both manager and sacrificer, until she died and became an ancestress honored by her descendants.<sup>71</sup> A woman's changing status

studied the gradual but steady adoption of Zhou marriage rites (preserved in the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial*) during the five hundred years from the early Western Zhou to the end of the Spring and Autumn period.

<sup>69</sup> For example, in the southern state of Chu, which was known for its exotic religious practices, ancestor worship was no doubt the religion of the ruling elite, at least by the eighth and seventh centuries BCE (Cook 1999). To claim that ancestor worship was prevalent in the Zhou cultural sphere does not deny the coexistence of many other religious practices in early China (Falkenhausen 2006: 28–29; Harper 1994; Poo 1998), or for that matter, in later Chinese history.

<sup>70</sup> According to Plutarch, seduction and adultery could be avoided by making the girls sing, dance, and play in public and under the eyes of their potential husbands (Calame 2001: 93; Pomeroy 2002: 34, 41–42).

<sup>71</sup> This assumes the patrilineal and patrilocal form of marriage to be the norm. A record in Ban Gu's *History of the Western Han* points to exceptions to this principle. According to that record, to cover his incestuous affairs with his sisters and his female cousins (whom he kept unmarried), Duke Xiang of Qi (r. 698–686 BCE) ordered that all eldest daughters in the state be withheld from marriage in order to tend to the ancestral sacrifices offered in their fathers' households (Hinsch 2002: 138). Despite Ban Gu's assertion, the import of this custom remains unclear. Although I acknowledge that nonpatrilineal marriage practices existed in ancient China (and certainly



in ancestor worship finds an interesting reflection in the spectrum of readings that Ode 15 ("Cai pin," Gathering Duckweed) has received:

Here we are gathering duckweed  
By the banks of the southern dale.  
Here we are gathering water-grass  
In those channeled pools.

Here we are packing them  
Into round basket, basket square.  
Here we are boiling them  
In kettles and pans.

Here we lay them beneath the window  
Of the ancestral hall.  
Who is the mistress of them?  
A young girl purified.<sup>72</sup>

There is no question that the first two stanzas of the poem concern the preparation for an ancestral sacrifice, but who is the "young girl purified" in the last line, what role does she play in the rites, and what type of rites is in question? In one reading, the last stanza of the poem describes a sacrifice at a young girl's natal house that is intended to announce to her father's ancestors that she is ready to leave them and become a wife and an attendant at her marital family's ancestral altar. This reading is based on the chapter on weddings in the *Book of Rites*, which says that three months prior to a girl's marriage an ancestral sacrifice must be performed to mark the conclusion of the training she has received at her natal house. An essential part of such training is for a girl to observe and assist in the ancestral rites at her father's house so that she will be prepared for her future duties as manager and sacrificer in her husband's house.<sup>73</sup> In another reading, the poem is one of praise for

in later Chinese history), I believe that, in the period under study, the patrilineal and patrilocal family was (and likely long had been) the norm. Even in Qi, the reported custom of eldest daughters not marrying and staying with their natal families implies that *all other* daughters were expected to get married and move in with their husbands' families. See Lu Yun's (1990) study of the increasing adoption of Zhou marriage rites in the period of our concern. On my view of the role of internal changes and variations in a comparative study, see the Introduction. In the appendix to Chapter 5, I will take up the unusual marriage practices in some parts of China in recent history and discuss how they can be understood within the mainstream culture.

<sup>72</sup> Cheng and Jiang 36–38; Waley 15–16. In later Chinese history, "tending to matters of duckweed" became a conventional way of referring to women's responsibilities for ancestral sacrifices in their husbands' houses.

<sup>73</sup> MSZ 286–287.

a nobleman's wife who acquits her sacrificial duties well, and the reference to her youth ("a young girl purified") in the last line is supposed to arouse in the reader a greater appreciation for the woman's virtuous conduct.<sup>74</sup> Finally, there is a reading that takes the poem to be about a sacrifice in honor of an ancestress, in which the "young girl purified," who is a granddaughter of the ancestress, serves as her Impersonator (in the same way that young males, usually grandsons, act as Impersonators in sacrifices for their ancestors).<sup>75</sup>

It is not my intention to settle the controversy surrounding the reading of Ode 15. For my purposes, it is most interesting to note that the different readings invoke a woman's different, evolving roles in ancestor worship: observer and assistant (as daughter),<sup>76</sup> manager and sacrificer (as wife), and ancestress (in the afterlife). Since marriage represents the event that formally incorporates a woman into the basic social and ritual unit constituted by the patrilineal family, the following discussion will focus on how rituals surrounding marriage mark this crucial process of transfer and incorporation.<sup>77</sup>

Before a bridegroom leaves to fetch his bride, he must make an offering in his ancestral temple to inform his ancestors of the imminent wedding.<sup>78</sup> To skip this ceremony could be considered a gross violation

<sup>74</sup> Zhu Xi, *SJZ* 1:19a–b. A sticking point in this reading lies in the question of why *nü* 女 (girl, unmarried woman) instead of *fu* 婦 (wife, married woman, daughter-in-law) is used in the last stanza to refer to the woman conducting the sacrifice. One way to remove this difficulty is to treat the last stanza as a reference to the training that the wife received when she was a girl (*SSY* 2.13).

<sup>75</sup> Wang Fuzhi (1619–1692), *SB* 1.8b–9b. Wang Fuzhi's reading rests on a different interpretation of the third line in the last stanza, "*Shui qi shi zhi* 誰其尸之." Whereas other commentators understand "*shi* 尸" to mean "to administer, to be in charge of," Wang invokes its meaning as "Impersonator" in early sources.

<sup>76</sup> Possibly as Impersonator for an ancestress, too, if Wang Fuzhi's opinion, which does not have much of a following, can be backed up by more research on the role of unmarried girls in ancestral sacrifices during the period under study here.

<sup>77</sup> The rituals discussed in the following passages are based on the following sources: the *Odes*, *Zuo's Commentary*, the bronze inscriptions, and a chapter in the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial*.

<sup>78</sup> In an inscription (*JC* 9697) dated to the mid-to-late Western Zhou, a man states that he cast the vessel, which he dedicated to his mother, on the occasion of his upcoming wedding (Cao Zhaolan 2004: 171–172). It can be inferred that the vessel was used in an ancestral sacrifice during which the man conducted the ritual of report discussed here. An historical record of the practice is contained in *Zuo's Commentary* (Zhao 1, Yang 1199–1200). In the spring of 541 BCE, Prince Wei of Chu (the future King Ling, r. 540–529 BCE) went to Zheng to fetch his bride, a daughter of Gongsun Duan. Before the trip, Prince Wei sacrificed in his ancestral temple and reported to his ancestors. The nineteenth-century scholar Fang Yurun (*SY* 2.94–95) surmises that Ode 12 ("Que chao," Magpie's Nest), which is usually understood as a celebration of

that might endanger the perpetuation of the family line.<sup>79</sup> The meaning of the conjugal union and the purpose of the report to ancestors can be seen in the formulaic instruction that the groom's father imparts to him: "Go to meet your helpmate, and carry on the responsibility for the affairs of our ancestral temple. Encourage and guide her to act reverently as the successor of the ancestresses. Your guidance of your wife should be constant. 往迎尔相承我宗事助帥以敬先妣之嗣若則有常."<sup>80</sup> These rituals may have their counterparts at the bride's natal household before the wedding, in a sacrifice conducted to report to her father's ancestors her upcoming departure.<sup>81</sup>

The transfer of the bride from her natal family to her husband also takes place at her father's ancestral temple.<sup>82</sup> On the day after the

a wedding, may have been a song performed during the groom's report at his ancestral temple. The first stanza of Ode 12 reads, "Now the magpie had a nest, / But the cuckoo lived in it. / Here comes a girl to be married; / With a hundred coaches we'll meet her" (Cheng and Jiang 29–31; Waley 13). The next two stanzas contain slight variations in wording.

<sup>79</sup> *Zuo's Commentary* records such a violation. In 715 BCE, Prince Hu of Zheng traveled to Chen to fetch his bride, but reported the union to his ancestors only after the fact. This lapse incurred vehement criticism from the Chen minister who escorted the bride, "They do not make for husband and wife. The ancestors have been deceived, and the rites have been violated. How can they have heirs?" (是不為夫婦 誣其祖矣非禮也何以能育) (*Zuo*, Yin 8, Yang 59).

<sup>80</sup> *Yili*, 972. I have consulted Peng (1997: 42) and Yang (2004: 50) in translating the last part of the instruction (*ruo ze you chang*).

<sup>81</sup> An inscription (*JC* 4269) on a Western Zhou tureen records a conversation in which a father tells his daughter that now that she is getting married he will give her a set of vessels (he enumerates them) as gifts (Cao Zhaolain 2004: 91 believes that they are sacrificial vessels for the newlyweds to use after marriage). The daughter thanks her father for the gifts and promises that she and her husband will treasure them forever. This solemnly transcribed conversation (the month, day, and hour of its occurrence are duly noted) obviously took place at a ceremonial occasion, likely the one under discussion. Many classical commentators understand Ode 15 to be about the rites performed at the bride's house to mark the bride's readiness to depart for her husband's home. Fang Yurun reads Ode 15 as the counterpart of Ode 12. Both were performed at sacrifices in the ancestral temples, Ode 12 at the groom's house, and Ode 15 at the bride's natal house (*SY* 2.100).

<sup>82</sup> *Yili*, 965–966. As noted in *Zuo's Commentary* (see note 78 above), fearing that Prince Wei of Chu would launch a surprise attack once his entourage entered the city, the Zheng councilor Zichan ordered that the ceremony marking the transfer of the bride be held at an altar constructed in the suburbs instead of at the ancestral temple of the father of the bride, Gongsun Duan. Prince Wei of Chu protested that such an arrangement was humiliating and that it deceived his ancestors, whom he had solemnly informed of his upcoming wedding at the sacrifice he conducted prior to his trip to Zheng. Only after he convinced Zheng that his men were not armed was the prince allowed to enter the city and, presumably, to meet his bride at the Gongsun's ancestral temple (the normal practice).

wedding, as part of the matrimonial rituals, the bride has to present herself to her parents-in-law. At the presentation, the parents-in-law bestow food and drink on the bride and she in turn serves them food; both activities follow a set of rituals. The crucial importance of the presentation of the bride can be seen from the stipulations governing the case in which the girl's parents-in-law are already dead at the time of the wedding. The bride is to make a sacrifice at the ancestral altar three months after the wedding to formally present herself as the family's daughter-in-law. At the presentation, which takes place in the husband's ancestral temple, the bride makes sacrificial food offerings to her dead parents-in-law and informs them of her new membership in the family (*Yili*, 970).

With her formal presentation (either on the day following the wedding or three months later), the bride assumes her role in the husband's descent group and begins to participate in the various ancestral sacrifices that go on throughout the year (*Yili*, 972). If her husband happens to be the eldest male of his generation in the family's Main Line and she is his principal wife, she is destined in time to succeed her mother-in-law as manager of the sacrifices (as indicated in the instruction with which the father dispatches his son to fetch his bride). The principal wife of the eldest male heir in the Main Line enjoys ritual precedence among the family's daughters-in-law (including the husband's other consorts and the wives and consorts of the other sons).<sup>83</sup> When the time

<sup>83</sup> There is rich evidence in the extant sources that the ruling elite in Western Zhou and Spring and Autumn China practiced polygyny, in which a man had a principal wife and additional consorts. While the male lineage head is commonly called the *zongzi* 宗子 (lineage son) in Western Zhou sources, the title of *zongfu* 宗婦 (lineage wife) in the sense of the *zongzi*'s principal wife is attested to in only a few inscriptions (*JC* 10342, dated to the 500s BCE; and *JC* 2683, dated to the early Spring and Autumn period and inscribed on a set of sixteen vessels). In texts such as the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* and the *Discourses of the States*, the term *zongfu* refers to the wives of lineage members. In numerous instances in the “*Te sheng kui shi* 特牲饋食” chapter of the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* (*Yili*, 1178–1195), the principal wife of the lineage head (the woman who presides over the ancestral ritual alongside her husband) is referred to as *zhufu* 主婦. The precise meanings of the terms used in different sources for the principal wife of the lineage are worth investigating, but it seems clear that the woman enjoyed special status (Chen Chao-Jung 2003: 409; Zhu Fenghan 2004: 314). An important indication of the principal wife's special status is that her parents-in-law will mourn her death at a higher grade than they will mourn their other daughters-in-law (*Yili*, 1114, 1118). The mourning grades, determined by a combination of the length of the mourning period (three years, one year, nine months, seven months, five months, three months) and the coarseness of the

comes for her to assume responsibility for the ancestral sacrifices, she not only will oversee the organization of the events but also will take up her position in the ceremonies alongside her husband, as he leads the lineage's male members and she the female members in performing the rites.<sup>84</sup> The hierarchy on the distaff side is an integral part of the effort to construct a patrilineal and patriarchal family order.<sup>85</sup> Men are expected to set good examples for their wives in maintaining this order, which is anchored in ancestral piety, as seen in the father's formulaic instruction to the groom and in the idealized image of King Wen as someone who not only was obedient to and reverent toward his ancestors but also served as a model for his wife.<sup>86</sup>

The ancestresses occupy an honored position in the family order. The *Odes* contains a number of examples of the ancestresses being honored alongside the ancestors in the sacrifices. For instance, Ode 282 ("Yong," Solemn State), a sacrificial hymn, ends with the sacrificer's invitation to his "illustrious father" and "civil mother" to receive his offerings (Cheng and Jiang 966). Another song, Ode 279 ("Feng nian," Abundant Is the Year), is about a sacrifice made in the wake of a good harvest:

Abundant is the year, with much millet, much rice;  
But we have tall granaries,  
To hold myriads, many myriads and millions of grain.  
We make wine, make sweet liquor,  
We offer it to ancestor, to ancestress,

mourning dress (*zhancui*, *zicui*, *dagong*, *xiaogong*, *sima*, in descending order), reflect everyone's status and relationships in the kinship network. A relative for whom one wears *zhancui* for three years and a relative for whom one wears *sima* for three months stand at opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of the prescribed closeness of the mourner to them. Parents-in-law wear *dagong* for nine months for the principal wife of a family's eldest male heir and *xiaogong* for five months for other daughters-in-law. On the mourning grade system, see Ding Ding (2003), Ding Linghug (2000), and Lai (2003).

<sup>84</sup> Ode 209 offers a lengthy description of an ancestral sacrifice (discussed in Chapter 2) and shows women acting in their managerial capacity. In the ceremony, the organization of the participants along gender lines can be seen in the "*Tè sheng kui shì*" chapter of the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* (*Yili*, 1178–1195).

<sup>85</sup> She Shusheng (1993) makes this point in discussing Zhou polygyny, in which the strict hierarchy among the wives defined a correspondingly strict hierarchy among the sons, thus assuring order in the inheritance of property and office, and in other privileges. The critical implications of the practice of polygyny for Chinese gender relations will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

<sup>86</sup> Here I quote again Ode 240's praise of King Wen (discussed in Chapter 2): "He was obedient to the ancestors of the clan, / So that the Spirits were never angry; / So that

We use it to fulfill all the rites,  
To bring down blessings upon each and all.<sup>87</sup>

The joint honoring of ancestors and ancestresses in the sacrifices is well attested in bronze inscriptions, too. Most commonly, a man dedicates a vessel (or a set of vessels) to his father and mother, but sometimes multiple generations of ancestors and ancestresses are the intended recipients.<sup>88</sup> Of greater interest are the sacrificial vessels that have ancestresses (deceased mothers in all instances) as their sole dedicatees.<sup>89</sup> Fortunately, a few of these vessels contain relatively long inscriptions that record the circumstances of the making of the vessel and offer good insight into the religious, ethical, and psychological significance of the mother-son relationship in the early Chinese family. The most instructive examples are provided by two vessels made by Dong, a mid-Western Zhou officer who served in King Mu's campaign against the Huai tribes.

One Dong vessel is a square cauldron. Its inscription begins by stating that the king, cherishing the memory of Dong's late father, appointed Dong to lead an army against the Huai barbarians. Next, Dong credits his father and mother with granting him a firm heart in the battle and enabling him to return unharmed to be commended and entertained by the king (which implies that Dong had been victorious). In the last section, Dong states that he had this cauldron cast in honor of his mother, and it was to be used in solemn sacrifices conducted for her day and night (*JC* 2824). In this inscription, Dong's father and mother share their son's gratitude (even though the cauldron was dedicated only to the mother), but the other vessel, a tureen, that Dong cast in honor of his mother, and the strong sentiments in its inscription, makes it clear that his mother occupied a special place in Dong's life. In Edward Shaughnessy's translation, this remarkable inscription (*JC* 4322) reads:

the Spirits were never grieved. / He was a model to his chief bride; / A model to his brothers old and young, / And in his dealings with home and land" (Cheng and Jiang 773; Waley 235-236).

<sup>87</sup> Cheng and Jiang 959-960; Waley 297. Ode 290 ("Zai shan," Clear Away the Grass) contains a verbatim repetition of the lines "We make wine, make sweet liquor, / We offer it to ancestor, to ancestress, / We use it to fulfill the rites" (Cheng and Jiang 981; Waley 304).

<sup>88</sup> For example, *JC* 2680, *JC* 2762-2763, *JC* 2777, *JC* 2789, *JC* 2827-2829, *JC* 4090, *JC* 4102-4103, *JC* 4147-4151 (honoring fathers and mothers); *JC* 271, *JC* 285, *JC* 5427 (honoring multiple generations of ancestors and ancestresses).

<sup>89</sup> According to Cao Zhaolan's (2004: 200) statistics, there are 61 such cases in the Western Zhou inscriptions (50 for mother, and 11 for paternal grandmother).

It was the sixth month, first auspiciousness, *yiyou* (day 22), at the Jing Encampment. The belligerents attacked X. Dong led the supervisors and captains to chase after and defend against the belligerents at Yu Woods, striking the belligerent Hu. My cultured mother competitively and earnestly opened the march, granting firmness to his heart, eternally giving inheritance to his body, and ruling and conquering his enemies. (I) took one hundred heads, shackled two chiefs, and captured the belligerents' weapons: shields, spears, halberds, bows, quivers, arrows, uniforms, and helmets, in all 135 pieces. (I) captured 114 belligerent captives and clothed (them?). There was no harm to Dong's body. Your son Dong bows and touches his head to the ground, in response extolling his cultured mother's fortune and valor, herewith making (for) his cultured mother of the day Geng this treasured, sacrificial *gui* tureen. Help your son Dong for ten thousand years herewith morning and night to sacrifice and offer filiality to his cultured mother. May his sons' sons and grandsons' grandsons eternally treasure (it).<sup>90</sup>

The image of Dong's mother as she appears in her son's memory is a striking one. A woman of firm resolve and deeply caring for her son, she offers Dong courage and comfort as he faces war, and she no doubt will enjoy his expression of attachment, gratitude, and reverence in his act of inscribing the vessel and dedicating it to her. In the last chapter, examples of Zhou nobles and officers dedicating sacrificial vessels in honor of their male ancestors after military victories were discussed. In none of those instances does the inscription reveal the kind of personal and intimate touch that characterizes the Dong inscriptions, especially the one on the tureen. It seems that, whereas a male ancestor had unquestionable claims to his descendants' piety by virtue of his being at the higher end of the patriline and as the source of his offspring's status (Dong attributes his appointment to his father's past service to the king),<sup>91</sup> an ancestress may have enjoyed privileged access to her son's feelings. More than an imposing figure commanding her son's piety because of their biological link, Dong's mother appears to him in a momentous situation, giving him determination, shielding him from harm, and rallying him to victory.

<sup>90</sup> Shaughnessy (1991: 177–180).

<sup>91</sup> Chen Chao-jung's (2003: 403) classification of the dedicators and dedicatees of the cauldrons and tureens (the two types of bronzes whose finds are the most numerous and are evenly distributed over different periods) indicates the relative ritual importance of various kinship relationships: son to father (483 vessels), grandson to grandfather (72 vessels), grandson to grandfather and father (54 vessels), son to mother (29 vessels), and grandson to grandmother (4 vessels). There is no question about the subordinate ritual status of the ancestresses vis-à-vis the ancestors.

The honoring of ancestresses was an integral part of ancestor worship and may have contained a stronger emotional dimension in comparison with the reverence demonstrated toward male ancestors.<sup>92</sup> The religious sanction conferred on motherhood, from which derived a woman's greatest power and the ultimate meaning prescribed for her life, played a critical role in buttressing a family order that depended on the links between agnatic male relatives and thus almost inevitably would have trouble securing the loyalties of the women brought into it. A change that is observed to have taken place from the late Shang through the Western Zhou, namely, a significant increase in the practice of jointly honoring ancestors and ancestresses (who were much more likely to receive separate sacrifices in the Shang sources), may have reflected an attempt to strengthen the patrilineal family order by enhancing the family's control over women and defining their place in the patriline.<sup>93</sup>

At the other end of the family order from the honored ancestresses are the wives. Not only did the wives manage and participate in the ancestral sacrifices but they also sponsored the casting of sacrificial vessels dedicated to patrilineal ancestors and ancestresses, an activity that entailed tremendous material resources and carried crucial status implications.<sup>94</sup> Women also received bronzes from their parents (usually

<sup>92</sup> Similarly, Miranda Brown (2007, ch. 3) suggests that the reason the elite of the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220) reserved their most poignant expressions of grief for their mothers rather than their fathers had to do with the different associations that fathers and mothers tended to carry, with fathers linked to dutifulness and conformity to ritual rules and mothers to the personal and intimate feelings that they inspired in their sons.

<sup>93</sup> According to statistics in Cao Zhaolan (2004: 48–49, 199–200), among the Shang bronze and oracle bone inscriptions, 111 show mothers and paternal grandmothers as the sole recipients of sacrifices and only 7 show women being jointly honored with their husbands. In contrast, among the Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, 61 show mothers and paternal grandmothers receiving sacrifices independently and 34 show joint sacrifices. Cao Zhaolan (2004: 200) argues that the change reflects a great loss of female religious independence from the Shang to the Zhou. She believes that the trend continued in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, but the relatively poor quality of the inscriptional evidence from those periods (the bronze culture was waning and the inscriptions became fewer, shorter, more formulaic, and less informative) makes her discussion sketchy and her analysis inconclusive (her statistics show only 6 cases of independent sacrifices and 16 cases of joint sacrifices). Nevertheless, the textual sources pertaining to the Spring and Autumn period that I will examine shortly confirm both Cao's point and the essential arguments that I have made based on Western Zhou sources.

<sup>94</sup> Chen Chao-jung's (2008) unpublished paper offers a systematic analysis of the bronzes with either a sponsor or a dedicatee who was a woman. Some examples of vessels that



as a part of their bridal trousseaus) and, after marrying, from their husbands; in both instances, the bronzes came with explicit instructions that the vessels be used for sacrificing to the ancestors and ancestresses of the husbands' patriline.<sup>95</sup>

Of all the vessels with female sponsorship, a cauldron dedicated by Jin Jiang, the duchess of Jin, and dated to the early Spring and Autumn period, is the most interesting. Although it does not specify the dedicatee, the 121-character-long inscription opens with Jin Jiang's statement that since inheriting her leadership role from her "late mother-in-law" (*xian gu*) she has not neglected her duties but has worked hard to assist her lord for the good of the state (*JC* 2826).<sup>96</sup> Judging from this impressive inscription (in terms of its length and of the commanding tone with which the woman speaks), it seems that the same relationship of ritual and political succession between father and son obtained between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

The textual sources show that the ritual relationship of hierarchy and succession between a woman and the ancestors of her husband's family was supposed to find expression in the everyday relationship between the woman and her parents-in-law, in particular the mother-in-law. In other words, religious piety to ancestors and filial piety to living parents-in-law became homologous and constituted two fully integrated parts of what might be regarded as the program of cultural transmission for women. Zixia (b. 507 BCE), a favorite disciple of Confucius, once quoted an unspecified source to say that the ancients considered it a misfortune for a woman whose parents-in-law had already died when she married into the house, because that meant she was deprived of the

women dedicated to their patrilineal ancestors and ancestresses include: (a) from wife to husband's deceased mother: *JC* 2333 (early Western Zhou), 3621 (early Western Zhou), 5426 (early or mid-Western Zhou), and (b) from wife to husband's other ancestors and ancestresses: *JC* 2582 (late Western Zhou), 2767 (late Western Zhou), 4182 (late Western Zhou), 10274 (Spring and Autumn). The relatively long inscription *JC* 5426 (50 characters) shows a mother-in-law as the sole dedicatee and provides context about the casting of the vessel. According to the inscription, the noblewoman Geng Ying, having had the honor of welcoming the Zhou king to her residence and having received gifts from him on that occasion, subsequently, "in response to the king's beneficence," commissioned a sacrificial vessel in honor of her "cultured mother-in-law" (*wen gu*).

<sup>95</sup> Examples include *JC* 2679 (late Western Zhou or early Spring and Autumn), 4056 (late Western Zhou), 4062 (late Western Zhou), 4436 (late Western Zhou), and 5388 (early Western Zhou). See discussions in Chen Chao-jung (2003: 428–430; 2008) and Hwang (2004:19).

<sup>96</sup> Cao Zhaolan (2004: 238–241) discusses this inscription.

chance to learn from them.<sup>97</sup> Diligent management and performance of ancestral sacrifices only partially fulfilled the demands of filial piety, which entailed service and obedience to living parents-in-law as its other imperative. A record in *Zuo's Commentary* (*Zuo*, Xiang 2, Yang 920–921) is illuminating on this point.

In 571 BCE, Qi Jiang, the wife of Duke Cheng of Lu (r. 590–573 BCE) died. In what was apparently an act of retaliation against Mu Jiang (d. 564 BCE), the duke's ambitious and adulterous stepmother, Ji Wenzhi (d. 568 BCE), the chief councilor of Lu, took the funerary materials that Mu Jiang had prepared for herself and used them in Qi Jiang's burial. Ji Wenzhi's action prompted the comment by a "gentleman" that "it is against the rites. Rites do not allow perversions. A daughter-in-law is the person who serves her mother-in-law. There is no greater perversion than benefiting the daughter-in-law at the expense of the mother-in-law. 非禮也禮無所逆婦養姑者也亏姑以成婦逆莫大焉." Following these strong words, the gentleman commentator drove home his criticism of Ji Wenzhi by quoting from the *Odes*: "Mu Jiang is the duke's mother. The *Odes* says, 'We make wine, make sweet liquor, / We offer it to ancestor, to ancestress, / we use it to fulfill all the rites, / To bring down blessings upon each and all.'" This is the same stanza from Ode 279 that was quoted earlier to illustrate the practice of jointly honoring ancestors and ancestresses in ancestor worship. The lack of a transition between the remark "Mu Jiang is the duke's mother" and the quotation from Ode 279 in the indignant criticism by the "gentleman" indicates that it was self-evident to the commentator that, despite her questionable character, Mu Jiang deserved the reverence owed to all mothers and ancestresses and that the misappropriation of her funerary materials for the sake of her daughter-in-law was sacrilegious. If a daughter-in-law is defined as "someone who serves her mother-in-law," then it was a horrendous breach of decorum for her, at her own death, to transgress upon the older woman's prerogatives. The same principles of hierarchy and succession were supposed to govern both the conduct of ancestral ritual and the relationship between the mother and her son's wife in daily life. The two could not be separated, with the ritual sacralizing the quotidian and the quotidian realizing the spirit of the ritual.

The emphasis on the ritual relationship between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law in ancestor worship evinces attempts to address

<sup>97</sup> *Guoyu*, Lu 2, 202. Obviously, the "ancients" cited by Zixia as his authorities took the perspective of the parents-in-law and not that of the bride.

the fractures that women could cause in the fabric of the patrilineal family. Whereas both women are brought from the outside into the patrilocal, patrilineal, and patriarchal family, the mother has through her services in reproduction and household management demonstrated her loyalty and so may assume the role of the younger woman's supervisor in daily life and mentor in the ritual realm. The focus on the ritual hierarchy and succession between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law thus aims at regulating a relationship that is crucial for the harmony and order of the family but may easily be filled with tension and conflict if the two women, especially the younger one, cannot acquit their roles well. By showing that venerated matriarchs and ancestresses made their way up from the lower end of the hierarchy after undergoing test and proof, ancestor worship consecrates and gives meaning to a family order whose stability to a great extent depends on its ability to secure the cooperation of its female members.

It is unclear whether Chinese ancestor worship, which as we know it was patrilineal by definition, in any way accommodated married women's continuing sacrifices to the ancestors of their natal families. That married women were still expected to fulfill important albeit reduced ritual duties to their natal relatives can be seen from the fact that they were required to mourn their parents upon their deaths for a year (instead of the three years prescribed for unmarried girls and for women who were divorced and had returned to their natal families) (*Yili*, 1106). So far, three bronze inscriptions are relevant to this issue.

The inscription *JC* 4198 (late Western Zhou) indicates that a married woman named Cai Ji commissioned the vessel for her elder brother so that he might use it in making sacrifices to their parents. In other words, Cai Ji sponsored the casting of the vessel and gave it to her brother for sacrificial purposes at her natal house.<sup>98</sup> Another inscription, *JC* 2676 (mid-Western Zhou), which has been taken as possible evidence that married women sacrificed to their natal ancestors,<sup>99</sup> is highly lacunose, missing several key characters that may contain the crucial information about *whose* ancestors are the intended recipients of the sacrifices made by the woman named Xing Ji. Finally, there is the inscription *JC* 4693 (Spring and Autumn period), which shows a woman named Ji Huanmu dedicating a vessel to seven generations of natal ancestors.<sup>100</sup> However,

<sup>98</sup> Cao Zhaolan (2004: 203–204), Chen Chao-jung (2008), and Shirakawa (2004: 284) all remark on how unusual the practice recorded in this inscription was.

<sup>99</sup> Falkenhausen (2006: 119) speculates on this possibility.

<sup>100</sup> Liu Yu (2008).

this exciting inscription is inconclusive as evidence for married women's continuing relationship with their natal ancestors because the text contains no indication of Ji Huanmu's marital status and the circumstances surrounding her sponsorship of the vessel are unknown. What factors, then, were behind the extraordinary practice (extraordinary in that a woman, married or unmarried, not only dedicated a vessel to natal ancestors but to seven generations of them) in the Ji Huanmu example? Was there some circumstance that if known would help to reconcile that practice with the predominantly patrilineal nature of Chinese ancestor worship? Without a better general understanding of women's ritual and familial roles in ancient China or of the specific circumstances of Ji Huanmu's personal life, these questions must remain unanswered for now.<sup>101</sup>

Current knowledge probably allows a little more to be said about the Cai Ji inscription, however. As does the fact that married women maintained mourning obligations to their natal relatives, the Cai Ji inscription demonstrates that after marriage women sustained ritual, emotional, and, apparently, economic ties to their natal families. Though Cai Ji could not participate directly in the sacrifices to her natal ancestors, whose blessings would not extend to her, that did not prevent her from commissioning a bronze vessel and dedicating it to her deceased parents via her brother. Society's obvious need for marriage alliances would make any attempt at a complete severing of women's natal connections both irrational and impossible. However, the rarity of evidence like the Cai Ji inscription (so far the only one known of this kind) suggests the general domination of the patrilineal definition of a married woman's identity, although there may have been considerable tension between the maintenance of women's natal ties and the expectations for married women in the patrilineal family.<sup>102</sup> The honored status accorded mothers and ancestresses in a familial order sanctified by ancestor worship may have offered tremendous incentives for women to be co-opted, but the incorporation was never complete and seamless, and women, perhaps especially those who were not matriarchs, continued to reach out to their natal relatives in receiving and offering support.

<sup>101</sup> Liu Yu (2008: 46) first pieced together *JC* 4693 and another inscription to discover that natal ancestors were the objects of the sacrifice in *JC* 4693. Liu Yu agrees with Chen Chao-jung (2008) on the peculiarity of this inscription and acknowledges that we are unable to solve the puzzles it poses.

<sup>102</sup> W.-Y. Li (2007: 150–151) discusses records about such conflicts of interest for married women in *Zuo's Commentary*.

There appears to have been an acute awareness of the potential for women to cause fissures in the patrilineal family. The exaltation of the mother and the mother-in-law in ancestor worship can be understood as attempts to control such potential and make women into the guardians of the patrilineal family order. Two records found in the *Discourses of the States* illustrate this point. Both concern Jing Jiang, the mother of Gongfu Wenbo, a minister in sixth-century BCE Lu.

In the first story, Wenbo returns home from the duke's court to find his mother weaving. When he tries to stop her, pleading that it does not accord with her station, she serves him with a long reprimand. In arguing that weaving is the quintessential woman's work, Jing Jiang relates how every spring the queen and the wives of the ministers collaborate in weaving the king's sacrificial garment (*Guoyu*, Lu 2, 205). In fact, as a member of one of the most eminent families in Lu, Jing Jiang may herself have participated in such sacrificial weaving, which, along with making the food, constituted a woman's most important responsibility in preparing for ancestral sacrifices. Concluding her lecture, Jing Jiang expresses bitter disappointment with her son because rather than try to stop her he should have urged her to work harder at the loom "so as not to squander the ancestors' heritage 必無廢先人." Jing Jiang understands the sexual division of labor within the rationale of ancestor worship; such division underlies the familial and sociopolitical order that must be continuously sacralized by religious practices. Wenbo's failure of understanding shows him to be unqualified as a high official, and Jing Jiang fears that he will cause the family line to be extinguished (*Guoyu*, Lu 2, 208).

The other story concerns a multiple-day sacrifice in honor of Jing Jiang's deceased father-in-law, Ji Daozi (d. 530 BCE). During the first day, Jing Jiang has a proxy accept a toast from Ji Kangzi, Ji Daozi's grandson, and does not take part in the feast that follows the sacrificial ceremony. On the second day, she refuses to have the ceremony conducted without the presence of the officiator; this time, she attends the postceremony feast but withdraws before it is over (*Guoyu*, Lu 2, 209).

The internal commentator in this story, who is none other than Confucius himself, points out the significance of all of the gestures by Jing Jiang, especially the distance that she keeps from the feasts. After hearing about Jing Jiang's conduct during the sacrifices, Confucius commends her for her understanding of sexual separation. The philosopher's praise can be viewed in the context of the other records about Jing Jiang, which depict her as a firm believer in that fundamental

principle and a meticulous practitioner in her daily life.<sup>103</sup> In the current story, she goes so far as to refuse to accept in person the toast from her grandnephew. Seen in the same light, her insistence on the presence of the officiator, while doubtless indicating her faith in the importance of prescribed rules, more directly reveals a concern with the ritual maintenance of sexual propriety. For her, the lack of the officiator's oversight and guidance would have severely undermined the sacrifice's sanctifying power to reinforce the sexual order and would have skewed the purpose of this gathering of men and women. That this was Jing Jiang's concern is confirmed by her behavior during the postceremony banquetting. As observed by Wei Zhao (204–273), the author of the earliest extant commentary on the *Discourses of the States*, the matron's avoidance of and early withdrawal from the feasts are out of fear that the wining and dining might lead to sexual intemperance and she has taken those measures to distance herself from those circumstances (*Guoyu*, Lu 2, 210). For Jing Jiang, although the co-presence and cooperation of men and women during the sacrificial ceremony illustrate the working of a good family order, the subsequent feasting endangers that order because relaxation, mixing of the sexes, and pursuit of sensual pleasure are then the rule. Hence her pious attitude toward the conduct of ancestral sacrifices but careful avoidance of the feast.

There is no reason to doubt the historicity of Jing Jiang as an aristocratic lady living in sixth-century BCE Lu, although it is probably safer to approach her saintly image in terms of the construction of Confucian historiography. Her rigorous observation of ritual rules reflected the concerns of the fifth- and fourth-century BCE Confucian thinkers, who, in the course of theorizing and upholding the gender structure that they saw as a pivotal part of the traditional Zhou social order, resorted to the enthusiastic promotion of this female paragon. The posthumous honorific title she was given, “The Reverent” (*jing* 敬), obviously reflected her attitude toward rituals, with ancestral rites being a most important part.<sup>104</sup> As that which furnished the religious foundation of the Chinese familial and sociopolitical institutions, ancestor worship at once reinforced women's dependence and subordination and gave women status

<sup>103</sup> Jing Jiang will appear again in Chapter 4. Raphals (1998: 30–33, 92–98; 2001; 2002a) has examined the numerous stories about Jing Jiang in early Chinese texts.

<sup>104</sup> Zhou (2003) discusses the relationship between history and historiography in the texts about Jing Jiang. The idealizing stories about Jing Jiang can be described as hagiographic. For detailed analyses of the patterns in early Chinese historiography, see W-Y. Li (2007), Pines (2002), and Schaberg (2001).

and authority for their guardianship of the ritual order.<sup>105</sup> In a more concrete fashion than the mothers hymned about and commemorated in poems and bronze inscriptions, the imposing image of Jing Jiang, the reverent performer of ancestral rites and the ever-authoritative matron vis-à-vis the family's younger generations, epitomizes what women stood to gain if they upheld the patrilineal family order consecrated in ancestor worship.

Of course, Jing Jiang was exemplary; most other mothers and wives may have been less devoted, and their lack of full commitment, including most frequently perhaps their struggle to balance their loyalties to their marital and natal households, may have led to their being viewed as weak links in the patrilineal family chain. The fear and the reality of rifts in the family caused by female "outsiders" perhaps gave rise to more persistent and systematic efforts to co-opt women. Regardless of whether a supposed decline of the public festival was already underway in China in the period of this study, all the known evidence indicates that ancestor worship was the most important religious form that shaped men's and women's social identities and that the celebration of extrafamilial homosocial bonding (for either women or men) had never been a feature of the vividly described festivals.

### Greek Domestic Rites

In comparison with their lavish attention to festivals, the available Greek sources have little to say about women's performance of domestic rites. Nevertheless, some resemblances between women's roles in domestic rites in ancient China and Greece are obvious.

First, as in China, Greek women were both participants in and managers of the rites and feasts presided over by their kinsmen (usually fathers and husbands). For example, in Book 3 of the *Odyssey*, Nestor offers a sacrifice to Athena in his house after witnessing an epiphany of the goddess, and the women of the family (Nestor's wife, daughters, and daughters-in-law) raise a sacred shout before the men slaughter the sacrificial victim and also participate in the feast afterwards. Also, in Euripides' play *The Madness of Herakles* (lines 922–927), as the titular hero makes a sacrifice to cleanse his house of the pollution caused by

<sup>105</sup> On the basis of archaeological evidence, Falkenhausen (2006: 357–359) argues that mortuary manifestations of gender difference intensified during the Spring and Autumn period.

a slaying that has just occurred there, his wife and two young children stand before the altar of Zeus waiting for him to administer the ritual. In addition, Xenophon's *Oikonomikos* provides an example of women's assuming responsibility for managing family sacrifices. In Book 9 (sections 6–7), when the model Athenian gentleman Iskhomakhos instructs his young bride on how to arrange the family's movable property, the first category on his list is the sacrificial vessels. These objects, along with men's and women's holiday garments, are later classified under the category of "things used for festivities" in contrast to "things for daily use." Obviously, it was an important part of a Greek wife's duties to manage the family's sacrifices, which usually comprised festive celebrations.

A further parallel between ancient China and Greece lies in the fact that marriage entailed disruptions and changes in women's domestic ritual practices in both societies. A Chinese bride had to switch from honoring her father's ancestors to those of her husband and acquired a formal role in ancestor worship only upon her marriage. Similarly, her Greek counterpart had to adjust to the new gods in her husband's house and community when she got married. That Greek brides often had difficulty in doing so is suggested by a Sophoklean fragment, in which a female character thus contemplates the lot of women:

Young women, in my opinion, have the sweetest existence known to mortals in their fathers' homes, for their innocence always keeps children safe and happy. But when we reach puberty and can understand, *we are thrust out and sold away from our ancestral gods and from our parents*. Some go to strange men's homes, others to foreigners', some to joyless houses, some to hostile. And all this once the first night has yoked us to our husband, we are forced to praise and to say that all is well.<sup>106</sup>

Yet despite all the parallels between women's roles in domestic rites in ancient China and Greece – from participation in ceremonies and acquisition of managerial responsibilities to the likely painful adjustments required by marriage – the differences between the two traditions are nevertheless profound. First, it seems that Greek domestic rites were not as deeply or as extensively implicated in the construction of a patrilineal and hierarchical domestic order as in the Chinese case. It has been argued that a great difference existed between classical and Hellenistic practices regarding whether a daughter had to renounce her father's cult upon her marriage. According to Sarah Pomeroy, in

<sup>106</sup> Sophokles, fr. 583, from *Tereus*. Emphasis added. Tr. Lefkowitz and Fant (2005: 12–13).



the classical period a married woman could be invited to participate in the cult of her husband's household gods but she did not become a permanent member of it; instead, she remained a lifelong member of her natal cults. In the later period, by contrast, women were expected upon marriage to renounce their natal family's cults and switch to their husbands' household cults.<sup>107</sup> A passage in Plutarch's (46–120) *Advice to Bride and Groom* may evince the expectations of the later period as suggested by Pomeroy:

A wife ought not to have friends of her own, but use her husband's as their common stock. And the first and most important of our friends are the gods.<sup>108</sup> A married woman should therefore worship and recognize the gods whom her husband holds dear, and these alone. The door must be closed to strange cult and foreign superstitions. No god takes pleasure in cult performed furtively and in secret by a woman. (140c–d)

The classical practice, if it did allow a married woman to retain her membership in her natal family's cult while participating in the cult of her husband's household, may have afforded the woman more psychological and emotional security and made the disruptions caused by marriage (as lamented by the Sophoklean character) less distressing. However, there is a crucial difference between the Chinese case and the Greek case, inclusive of the classical and the Hellenistic periods (and of the Archaic period, too, based on what little we know about women and domestic rites in that period).

For a Chinese bride, whatever difficulties she may have had in developing an attachment to the new gods worshipped in the community of her husband's residence would likely be eclipsed by the demands on her to fit into a family order that operated under the auspices of a different

<sup>107</sup> Pomeroy (1997: 70–71; 1999, 140c–d). Mikalson (2005: 148), however, portrays a picture in which a Greek girl participated in the sacrifices of her father's house essentially as a temporary resident. In court testimony by Isaios dated between 383 and 363 BCE (VIII, "On the Estate of Kiron"), a man attempts to prove his kinship ties to his late maternal grandfather by claiming that the old man never offered a sacrifice if either he or his brother was not present. As the ultimate evidence for his membership in the religious activities at his grandfather's house, the speaker points out that he and his brother were invited to attend the grandfather's sacrifice to Zeus Ktesios, the cult that marks a household as a self-sufficient unit and excludes participation by either family slaves or non-kin free men (*eleutherois othneious*). Because he is addressing a jury composed of ordinary citizens, the speaker's repeated statements about how natural (or reasonable, *eikos*) it is for grandchildren to attend rites at their maternal grandfather's house may offer some support to Pomeroy's idea.

<sup>108</sup> "Idious ou dei philous ktasthai tēn gunaika, koinois de chrēsthai tois tou andros. Hoi de theoi philoi prōtoi kai megistoi."

set of ancestors. The latter adjustment entailed at the same time fulfillment of the bride's duties as a filial daughter-in-law. This initially hard struggle of hers would usually become increasingly easier as she became a mother herself and then a mother-in-law, and it would end when death conferred on her the status of an ancestress. As shown in the previous discussion, great effort was exerted to establish a continuum between piety to ancestors and service and obedience to parents-in-law and to affirm the ritual hierarchy both between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law and among wives of the same generation.

Such strong unity of domestic religious rites, family ethical principles, and routine household duties was not attested in the Greek tradition. A Greek woman's expression of religious piety in the domestic setting essentially involved her relationship with the gods (be they of her father's or her husband's house) who, in Plutarch's words, are "the first and most important of our friends" (*philoi prōtoi kai megistoi*). Accordingly, domestic religious practice had less extensive implications for a Greek woman's status and duties in the realm of family and kinship. While Greek domestic religious rites did purport to reinforce the male-centered structure of the family (with fathers and husbands playing the presiding role, and women performing subordinate and supportive functions in the rites), a woman's relationship with her in-laws (intergenerational or of the same generation) did not figure at all in Greek conceptions of female religious piety. This is true of the Homeric, Archaic and classical worlds as it is of the Hellenistic age. As already seen, Plutarch is concerned about wives' secretly worshipping gods other than those of their husbands, but he implies no connection between the religious purity he urges on the wives and any new duties to their in-laws they may have assumed with marriage. In the Greek tradition as a whole, the performance of domestic rites never became as directly or deeply intertwined with the urge to incorporate women into a patrilineal family order as they did in the Chinese tradition.

This brings us to the second major difference between the two traditions regarding women's performance of domestic rites. Whereas in the Chinese context a woman's status and influence heavily depended on her demonstration of domestic religious piety, the Greek sources show domestic rites as much less important than were the public festivals in providing women with social prestige and emotional satisfaction.

The state of our understanding of Greek women's role in domestic rites may be seen in the paucity of our knowledge about the cult of the goddess Hestia, who was the protector of the home and family

life and was worshipped on numerous occasions.<sup>109</sup> According to *The Homeric Hymn to Hestia* (29.5–6), people poured libations to the goddess before and after each feast. Other special events that involved sacrifices to Hestia included the reception of a bride into the house, the Amphidromia (“running around” the hearth) to mark the birth of a baby and its official acceptance into the family, and the entrance of a new slave.<sup>110</sup> Her unmistakable importance in domestic life notwithstanding, we know very little about how her cult was actually carried out. H. J. Rose has called Hestia the “mistiest and least personal” of all Greek household deities, and reasons that she may have paradoxically “suffered from being too visible.”<sup>111</sup> I disagree with Rose’s speculation and would rather relate Hestia’s representational obscurity to the secondary status of domestic rites in the Greek religious system. The reasoning that the ancients did not “think it worthwhile to tell each other what everyone knows” cannot hold,<sup>112</sup> either within the Greek context or from a comparative view. The Greeks left behind abundant art and literature about their festivals, with which everyone in the Hellenic world must have been familiar. Similarly, the Chinese spared no effort in documenting and systemizing the domestic rites that ought to have been a most familiar part of their daily life. Apparently both the Greeks and the Chinese thought it very worthwhile to tell one another what everyone already knew and what most engaged their passions and concern.

### Conclusion

Religion played crucial but different roles in defining the identity and status of women in ancient China and Greece. For Greek women, the highest prestige came from their participation in public festivals, where they competed in beauty and musical talent. The friendships that grew out of those competitions and related activities were critical to women’s social status and to their emotional life. In China, ancestor worship provided not only the religious foundation for the authority and honor that a woman could attain within her family and society but also a set of

<sup>109</sup> As in the case of other Greek cults, Hestia had both a household cult and a *polis* cult. In Chapter 1 I used the public hearth in the town hall to illustrate the state’s appropriation of the family’s religious authority in ancient Greece.

<sup>110</sup> On the various rituals, see Garland (1990: 93–94), Kamen (2007: 89, 99–100), and Rose (1957: 110–113).

<sup>111</sup> Rose (1957: 104).

<sup>112</sup> Rose (1957: 106).

ethical tenets that governed her daily conduct. The agonistic spirit and strong extrafamilial homosocial peer bonding embraced by women at the Hellenic festivals were characteristic of the Greeks as a whole. The reverent female participants at Chinese ancestral sacrifices, in occupying their designated places in the patrilineal family order as they strove for the ideal of hierarchical harmony, were guided by the same code of conduct binding on their kinsmen.

Moreover, in contrast to the anxiety about women's extrafamilial bonds and solidarity found in Greek representations of the all-female festivals, the Chinese sources reveal a deep concern with regulating the relationships among the wives of the family in the attempt to secure a harmonious domestic order under the auspices of the patrilineal ancestors. Regardless of how hard it may have been to realize the ideal affinity that ancestor worship sought to promote among the women of the family, no festival or other public religious institution seems to have fostered female extrafamilial homosocial bonding in such a way that it could play a crucial role in defining a Chinese woman's identity and status in her family or in society. By contrast, Greek sources place public festivals in the spotlight, providing a context in which extrafamilial ties among women are depicted with both enthusiasm and anxiety, and gender relations are represented as deeply agonistic.

From the perspective of religion, this chapter has delineated some broad structural differences in the nexuses of affinities and conflicts in gender relations in ancient China and Greece. These differences will be explored further in the next two chapters by examining other settings, drawing on a wider range of evidence, and bringing in women's voices.

## At the Table and Behind the Scenes

In this chapter Greek and Chinese representations of gender relations are examined in the context of two major types of convivial activities that took place in the home: family banquets in which women participated as full members, and drinking parties for male guests that had women at work behind the scenes as managers. How are men and women shown interacting with each other at the family banquet table and over the arrangements for the reception of guests? How do men view their female relatives as fellow convivialists and as providers for their gatherings with friends and associates? The key domestic relationships to be investigated are those between husband and wife, and between mother and son. An overview of the general discourses on the two sets of relationships in Greek and Chinese families will be provided before they are examined in a convivial context.

### Greece

#### *Gender Configuration in the Family: Husband–Wife*

Different forms of families existed in ancient Greece. Normally, at least one son in the Greek family stayed in the household after his marriage, and widowed parents often joined the household of a married son for maintenance in their old age.<sup>1</sup> From Homer onward, however, the nuclear family provided the normative framework within which the Greeks conceived of the ideal domestic order or prescribed female conduct.

The renown of the three exemplars of Greek womanhood, Penelope, Andromakhe, and Alkestis, is based on their devotion to their husbands

<sup>1</sup> Gallant (1991, ch. 2).

and has little to do with their attitudes toward their in-laws. Penelope wins “fame that reaches the sky” for awaiting Odysseus’ long delayed return from the Trojan War. While all the dramatic attention is on Odysseus’ palace, where Penelope lives with her young son and resists the pressure of the suitors, Odysseus’ father, Laertes, dwells in the remote countryside with some servants and presumably with his wife, Antikleia, too, before she dies pining for her absent son (*Od.* 11.187–203; *Od.* 24.226ff.). Penelope certainly is not admired in the epic or in the later traditions for being a filial daughter-in-law. This is true even though Penelope may have been a caring daughter-in-law when her in-laws lived in Odysseus’ palace. Before leaving for Troy, Odysseus gave Penelope this instruction: “You must take thought for my father and mother here in our palace, / as you do now, or even more, since I shall be absent. / But when you see our son grown up and bearded, then you may / marry whatever man you please, forsaking your household” (*Od.* 18.267–270, Lattimore 277). While these words indicate that Greek women were expected to treat their parents-in-law with respect and care, the absence of filial piety among the good qualities for which Penelope was known shows that such piety was not an essential part of the Greek repertoire of female virtue.

The images of Andromakhe, wife of the Trojan prince Hektor, tell the same story. Unlike Penelope, who lives in Odysseus’ palace with their young son, Andromakhe shares the palace of her parents-in-law with their other sons and daughters, and their spouses. Given this living arrangement,<sup>2</sup> the virtuous woman might be expected to shine in her relationship with her in-laws. In literature, however, Andromakhe appears as the modest, gentle, and loyal wife to Hektor;<sup>3</sup> nowhere does her quality as a daughter- or sister-in-law become a measure of her virtue, not even when she engages in a final conversation with Hekabe, her mother-in-law in Euripides’ *Trojan Women*, before all the captive

<sup>2</sup> Obviously accepting the nuclear family as the Greek norm, Tandy (1997: 11) remarks on the “oriental” nature of Hektor’s family. Humphreys (1978: 194, 200) also believes that the neolocal nuclear family was the norm in Homer. Donlan (2007: 34) disagrees and writes that “in the epics, the normal domestic group is the patrilocal joint family, consisting ideally of the patriarch and his wife, their unmarried sons and daughters, and their married sons with their wives and children – three generations living together in a single residential complex.” However, the heart of Donlan’s argument is that no corporate kinship group existed in Homeric times. On the absence of corporate kinship groups (in the style of anthropologically defined “clans” and “lineages”) in known Greek history, see the Introduction.

<sup>3</sup> *Iliad*, Books 6, 22, and 24; Euripides, *Trojan Women*.

Trojan women are about to embark for Greece. From Andromakhe's pronouncement of the high ideals of wifedom that she has striven to achieve (in vain now, since Hektor is dead and she has been assigned to be the concubine of the son of his killer), it is clear that filial piety to her husband's parents lies beyond her aspirations (*Trojan Women* 643ff.).

The same point can be seen in a more acute form in Euripides' *Alkestis*. Admetos, king of Pherai, lives in his palace with his wife, Alkestis, their two young children, and his aged parents. Alkestis is painstakingly portrayed as a virtuous wife, a loving mother, and even a benevolent and beloved mistress to the servants (lines 769–771), but there is no mention whatsoever of her relationship with her parents-in-law. The father appears on the stage only to engage in a quarrel with Admetos, who resents his parents for refusing to die in his stead and leaving Alkestis to do so, and the mother plays no role other than to receive her son's abuse *in absentia*.<sup>4</sup> The fact that Admetos, in his bitter and wide-ranging accusations against his parents, does not invoke Alkestis' kindness to them seems to indicate that this virtue was not a high priority in Greek expectations for wives. Most striking, in expressing his disgust with what he calls the cowardice (*apsychia*, line 642) of his parents, Admetos declares, on the one hand, that he does not consider himself their true-born son but, on the other hand, that with righteous cause he regards Alkestis, "a woman not of our house," as his "only father and mother."<sup>5</sup> Admetos is certainly not represented as a spokesperson for Greek mores in thus renouncing his parents and replacing them with his wife. However, the fact that the father, in his spirited rebuttal (lines 675–705), never faults Admetos for favoring his wife over his parents (instead, the father calls Admetos himself a coward for allowing Alkestis to die for him) shows that the centrality of the conjugal unit in family relationships is taken for granted.

The pattern that emerges from the portrayals of these three female paragons is confirmed by the conception of family order in Hesiod's *Works and Days* and in Xenophon's *Oikonomikos*, the first work on household management in Western history. Several chapters of the *Oikonomikos* deal with how Iskhomakhos, the model gentleman, trains his teenage bride in her duties as mistress of his household, which

<sup>4</sup> Admetos' longest railing spans lines 629–672. The declaration that he will not live with his parents again comes at 736–737.

<sup>5</sup> *Alkestis* 646–647 (*gynaik' othneian hēn egō kai mētera / patera t' an endikōs an hēgoimēn monēn*).

consists of the couple and their servants. Conceivably, in those families where the newlyweds lived with the groom's parents (which was by no means uncommon), the mother probably would have initiated the bride in the skills needed for household management.<sup>6</sup> However, at no point in Iskhomakhos' lengthy instructions to his wife does he ever indicate that he is taking up a charge that normally would have belonged to a mother-in-law. On the contrary, he acts as if it were the inherent and important duty of a husband in his capacity as the head of the household to transform a teenage bride into a true mistress of the house. In this respect, things do not seem to have changed much between fourth-century BCE Athens and Hesiod's world in seventh-century BCE Boiotia. According to Hesiod's *Works and Days*, which consists of advice on all aspects of agricultural life, a man should bring home a wife when he is about thirty years of age, and the bride should be a teenage virgin so that he can teach her "good habits" (lines 695–699). Whether for a model citizen residing in the greatest Greek city in the classical period or for a hardworking farmer in the rough country of Boiotia in the Archaic age, the assumption seems to be that the husband is in charge of the training of his bride and that his parents do not figure into the Greek conception of an ideal family order.

The conjugal couple thus was at the center of Greek notions of domestic relations, and the guiding principle was for the husband to exercise leadership over his wife. Although in the *Odyssey*, King Alkinoos is described as giving his wife Arete "such pride of place as no other woman on earth is given / of such women as are now alive and keep house for husbands" (*Od.* 7. 67–68; Lattimore 113), the exception only proves the rule. In understanding this exception, we must take into account that Alkinoos is also Arete's paternal uncle and that as her father's only daughter Arete would have held a share equal to Alkinoos' of her paternal grandfather's estate.<sup>7</sup> However, if both law and custom consigned

<sup>6</sup> That Iskhomakhos' parents have already died is indicated by the fact that he selected his marriage partner on his own (*Oik.* 7.11). Otherwise, as in China, marriage in Greece was a union of two families, and it would have fallen on the parents to arrange the matter for their children (Oakley and Sinos 1993; Redfield 1995). Because Greek men married relatively late (for Hesiod the optimum age was "not far short of thirty years nor much above," and Solon recommended somewhere between ages twenty-seven and thirty-four), there was a good chance that by the time of a man's first marriage his father would no longer be alive. On the ages at first marriage for Greek men and women, see Kamen (2007: 97).

<sup>7</sup> The kinship relationship between Arete and Alkinoos: *Od.* 7.55–66. The implications of this special relationship for the inheritance of a family estate are pointed out by C. B. Patterson (1998: 60).



wives to a position of subordination in Greek society, an intriguing paradox arises. Despite the systemic subordination of women, there is in Greek portrayals of conjugal relationships a pervasive presence of competition and conflict that finds expression both in the stereotype of wives who are warlike and hostile and in the idealization of wives who are their husbands' commensurable rivals and partners.

Let us consider such competition and conflict depicted at its most positive. The first exemplary couple to be discussed are Odysseus and Penelope. In contrast to such Homeric wives as Helen, who abandons Menelaos, and Klytaimnestra, who murders Agamemnon, Penelope faithfully awaits Odysseus' return during his twenty-year absence. Known for her faithfulness, she also gains wide fame for using a ruse to deceive her suitors for three years.<sup>8</sup> Husband and wife are described as each other's equal in intelligence from the first time they appear together in Book 19 of the *Odyssey*. Still unaware of Odysseus' identity, Penelope conducts an interview with the beggarly stranger who is in her house because of Telemakhos' (who knows of his father's plan) hospitality. Her questions to the stranger about his family and origins all meet with well-told lies from a man who is known for his many wiles and who in the epic is shown to be a masterful storyteller in any number of episodes.<sup>9</sup> As Penelope weeps to hear the tale about the fictive encounter between her husband and the stranger in her presence, Odysseus withholds his pity for her and sits motionless. This encounter between husband and wife is reenacted in Book 23, when Odysseus has disposed of the suitors and prepares to be reunited with Penelope, but this time their roles are reversed.

<sup>8</sup> Penelope successfully puts off the pressure from the suitors for three years by weaving a shroud for Laertes during the day but unraveling it at night. Before she sets her plan in motion, she pleads with the suitors to allow her to finish the weaving, claiming that she does not want to incur the wrath of the women of the land by letting Laertes, a rich man, die without a shroud. The suitors readily grant Penelope's request (*Od.* 2.96–103). It is noticeable that, instead of appealing in the name of filial piety, Penelope emphasizes the undesirability of the consequences should Laertes die shroudless, because such an end would be incommensurate with his wealth. That the suitors think along the same lines can be seen from their reaction after they discover Penelope's ruse. Though they condemn Penelope for her deception and they regret having been taken in, they never indicate that she has shamelessly abused their respect for the principle of a daughter-in-law's inviolable obligation to her husband's father. In any case, Penelope's use of the weaving scheme invoked for the Greeks her intelligence and her fidelity to her husband, not her character as a daughter-in-law.

<sup>9</sup> One of these is Odysseus' meeting with Eumaos, the swineherd (see Chapter 1). Another example is his reunion with his father, Laertes (see note 11 below).

Despite the urgings of her nurse and Telemakhos' repeated rebukes of her for being stubborn and having a heart harder than stone, Penelope refuses to recognize the man in front of her as her husband but demands to see "secret signs" that are "unknown to all but us."<sup>10</sup> To this Odysseus responds with confidence, and he asks Telemakhos to have patience and allow his mother to test (*peirazein*) him (*Od.* 23.113–114). However, the husband, the most astute man, will find himself outstripped by his wife in cunning. Still refusing to recognize him, Penelope gives orders to prepare a bed for the guest, and asks the nurse to carry out the bridal bed that Odysseus himself made. Caught completely off guard by this instruction, Odysseus flies into a rage and in his fiery reproach of Penelope reveals the secret about the bed: it was built around the trunk of an olive tree and cannot be moved without tearing up its base (in other words, it should have stayed where it was unless Penelope had been unfaithful and had allowed some man to enter their bedroom and chop away the trunk). By deliberately telling a lie, Penelope elicits from Odysseus the "secret sign" that she wants, and makes him lose the cool composure with which he lied to her earlier. It is after this contest of will and intelligence that husband and wife recognize each other and are happily reunited (*Od.* 23.173–204).<sup>11</sup>

No one writing about this exemplary Homeric couple can fail to be impressed by the rivalry between them as just recounted.<sup>12</sup> The compatibility and like-mindedness that they display in their exchange are such that one critic has described the moment of Penelope's recognition of Odysseus as "a moment of mutual surrender" in the wake of a combat.<sup>13</sup> In her 2001 article, Sarah Bolmarcich throws new light on how to understand that relationship. Analyzing why the word *homophrosyne* (like-mindedness), which generally refers to the understanding between political or military allies, is used of the marital relationship in the *Odyssey*, Bolmarcich argues that Odysseus and Penelope are

<sup>10</sup> Telemakhos' criticisms: *Od.* 23.97–103; Penelope's demand: *Od.* 23.110.

<sup>11</sup> Compare Homer's description of Odysseus' reunion with his father, Laertes, at the latter's orchard in the countryside. Intending to test (*peirēsomai*, *Od.* 24. 216) Laertes to see whether he can recognize his own son, Odysseus conceals his identity and tells stories about himself that stir Laertes so much that the old man breaks down in front of his visitor. Only then does Odysseus reveal who he is and embrace his father. Odysseus is able to deceive his father, but not his wife.

<sup>12</sup> Detailed interpretations of Penelope's test of Odysseus that address the competitive and reciprocal aspect of the couple's relationship can be found in Felson (1994, ch. 4), Winkler (1990a, ch. 5), and Zeitlin (1995).

<sup>13</sup> Felson (1994: 55–63, quote on p. 63).

described as comrades and equals. She points out that in his first meeting with Penelope Odysseus compares her to a “just king,” a description that has been used for Odysseus himself several times.<sup>14</sup> Placing the image of Penelope against the otherwise bleak picture of wifehood in the *Odyssey* (epitomized by Helen and Klytaimnestra), Bolmarcich infers that “Penelope must be analogized to a male ally of Odysseus in order to play the role of a faithful wife successfully.”<sup>15</sup> Such analogizing is tantamount to denying that a good relationship can exist between a man and a woman as a man and a woman; “for a good marriage to exist, both partners must act as though they were male comrades.”<sup>16</sup>

Xenophon’s *Oikonomikos* supports this interpretation. When Iskhomakhos tries to explain to his teenage bride the importance of an orderly household, he invokes two analogies. One is from the chorus (*Oik.* 8.3–4), the other from the army (*Oik.* 8.4–9). If the former would be easily comprehensible to the girl because choral participation was an important activity for Greek women (see the last chapter), the naming of the latter reflects the identity and interests of a good Athenian citizen-soldier. It is interesting that Iskhomakhos dwells on the army analogy for much longer, and that later he will again define the wife’s domestic managerial role in military terms. A wife is to inspect the chattels just as the commander of a garrison inspects his guards, and she is to make sure everything is in good condition just as the council examines the cavalry and the horses (*Oik.* 9.15). The result of the training that Iskhomakhos offers his bride, to the amazement of his interlocutor (Socrates), is that she has come to possess the mind of a man (*andrikēn dianoiān*; *Oik.* 10.1). Indeed, the whole didactic process, in which Iskhomakhos shows ever greater satisfaction with the effect of his teaching, sees the domestic steadily conflated with and subsumed under the political and military, and the wife gradually assimilated into a comrade. It culminates in Iskhomakhos’ revelation that he practices the art of public speaking by conducting court sessions at home with his wife. Acting as the judge, she has often ruled against him and condemned him to suffer punishment or pay damages (*Oik.* 11.23–24). This scenario goes directly to the center of Athenian public life, and the wife, having been compared to a military commander, is now a fellow citizen with whom one engages in competition, as well as cooperates with, in the quest for honor, good, and truth.

<sup>14</sup> *Od.* 18.109–114, 2.230–234, 5.8–12. Bolmarcich (2001: 212).

<sup>15</sup> Bolmarcich (2001: 213).

<sup>16</sup> Bolmarcich (2001: 213).

"A man couldn't steal anything better than a good wife, / just as nothing is more horrible than a bad one," opines Hesiod in his wisdom poem (*Works and Days* 702–703). A strong element of sexual rivalry may lie at the bottom of the ambivalent attitude characteristic of a long line of Greek authors from Homer and Hesiod to the classical playwrights and philosophers. In the eyes of many Greek husbands, a wife at her best comes close to being a loyal comrade, whereas a bad wife is like an enemy who engages in endless fights and seeks to outdo her spouses with persistence and cunning.

*Gender Configuration in the Family: Mother–Son*

In *The Glory of Hera: Greek Mythology and the Greek Family*, a provocative psychoanalytical study published more than forty years ago, Philip Slater presents an extremely dark picture of the mother–son relationship in the Greek family. As he argues, although the mother brings up her son in hopes of realizing her ambition through him, she also hates him because the more the child looks promising, the more he resembles and reminds her of her husband, whose devotion to public life makes him an aloof and oppressive figure in the family. The mother therefore is wont to take out her frustration with her husband on the child, and as the son grows up, he learns that he has to overcome his earlier dependence on the mother and squash her influence as he prepares to join his father and become a member of the community of male citizens.<sup>17</sup>

Slater's controversial theory correctly identifies two crucial, extradomestic factors that molded Greek domestic relationships, namely, the fundamental importance of extrafamilial homosocial bonds in defining male identity and the pervasiveness of the competitive spirit in Greek society. However, his application of the dynamics to the mother–son relationship is questionable. In my view, rather than being socialized to repudiate the initially powerful mother, the son learns early on that she is not a figure of authority and that he owes her support and respect but need not look up to her. That is, the Greek son's defiance of the mother as documented by Slater derives not from the son's resentment of the mother's formidable power but from the lack of a prescribed position of authority for her in a social structure that privileges experience and success in the common domain outside of the family. Penelope can appear as Odysseus' equal when they are together, but as will be seen, she has to yield to her son when Telemakhos feels the time has come for him to

<sup>17</sup> Slater (1968).

be master in the house. In fourth-century BCE Athenian court speeches, which provide a good gauge of the popular morality of the time because the speakers must sway the jury, the orator often defends his client's character by describing how the client had honored and maintained the elderly mother under his charge. Instead of portraying the mother as a figure of authority, the orators take pains to create the impression that she is an otherwise helpless old woman who deserves the security provided by her son.<sup>18</sup>

It must be quickly pointed out that the issue here is not whether there were powerful mothers in specific, individual Greek households but whether there existed any institutional basis for the mother's authority, in other words, whether the mother's power rested on legitimacy and whether it was habitually exercised within a hierarchy of roles.<sup>19</sup> The high honor that the Phaiakian queen Arete enjoys both from her husband (who is also her uncle) and from their children is explicitly said to be unique among all the women on earth (*Od.* 7.67–68, quoted earlier). In other words, the grim picture that Slater paints of the Greek mother–son relationship should be significantly modified. The son may have to renounce the mother's influence as he gets ready to join the community of male citizens, but the renunciation may not have to come through a violent struggle with a woman who has so far dominated him and attempts – in vain – to retain her domination. Perhaps it is precisely because the cultural reproduction of citizens most importantly took place in the common domain and among peer groups rather than in the family that the mother–son conflict is much less salient than conjugal rivalry in Greek representations.

Like his father, the son was expected to find his primary identity in the civic community and among his peers as he grew up. Moreover, when the son married and his wife took over the house, the mother lost the power she had had when she was the mistress of her husband's and subsequently of her bachelor son's household. Maintenance, respect, and attachment she could expect from the son, but she received them essentially as a special, honored guest. The newly formed conjugal pair occupied the center of the domestic unit, with the mother moving to the margins as a parent who needed and deserved care.

<sup>18</sup> Hunter (1989a, 1989b) argues for the authority commanded by widowed Athenian mothers, but the evidence from court speeches that she cites shows only respect and duty on the part of the sons.

<sup>19</sup> For this understanding I follow Lamphere (1974: 99), who applies the Weberian definition of power and authority in analyzing domestic power relations.

The legendary authority of the Spartan mother seems to constitute a conspicuous exception to what has just been said about Greek mothers, however. Plutarch's *Sayings of Spartan Women* preserves stories about many a Spartan mother who exhorted her son to die for the state and punished him for his failure to do so. Three examples will serve to illustrate the tenor of these stories about heroic mothers:

A woman, when she saw her son approaching, asked: "How does our country fare?" And when he said: "All are dead," she picked up a tile, threw it at him, and killed him, saying: "Then did they send you to bring us the bad news?"

Another Spartan woman killed her son, who had deserted his post, because he was unworthy of Sparta. She declared: "He was not my offspring."

Another, when her sons had run away from a battle and come to her, said: "Wretched runaway slaves, where have you come to? Or do you plan to steal back in here whence you emerged?" And she pulled up her clothes and exposed herself to them.

(Plutarch, *Sayings of Spartan Women*, 241.5, 241.1, 241.4)

Notably, in all of the stories the Spartan mother is shown as being assertive vis-à-vis her son *only* when it concerns his duty to the state and *not* his duty directly to herself or to the family. In that the exclusive focus of the stories about these Spartan mothers' authority is the mothers' "total commitment to the public military life in which they had no direct part,"<sup>20</sup> it can be said that the mothers act more to proclaim the supreme interest of the state as patriotic citizens (even though they were not full citizens in that they were not allowed to participate in fighting or political deliberation) than to assert their power as mothers *per se*. As Julia Sargent Murray (1751–1820) observed of the Spartan mothers long ago, "The name of Citizen possessed, for them, greater charms than that of Mother."<sup>21</sup> The Spartans who submitted themselves to their mothers' abuse and blades testify to the higher authority of the political community, comprised of the entire citizenry, which they had failed by their cowardice on the battlefield.

While the stories about assertive Spartan mothers showcase the Spartan citizens' duty to their state, hardly anything is known about Spartan mothers' relationships with their sons in the domestic sphere and over nonpublic affairs. In this sense, the mothers' fabulous independence and authority, as shown in Plutarch's *Sayings* and other sources

<sup>20</sup> C. B. Patterson (1998: 78).

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Pomeroy (2002: 62).

that attest the exceptional reputation of Spartan women in the Hellenic world, supplement and confirm what can be observed in the images of the unsung mothers in other Greek states. Pomeroy speculates that the stories about the Spartan mothers probably gained circulation because they revealed attitudes that other Greeks found astonishing. Ellen Millender argues that other Greeks (Athenians in particular) delighted in exoticizing the Spartan way of life and that the much greater freedom (or perhaps licentiousness, from the normative Greek standpoint) apparently enjoyed by Spartan women in comparison with their sisters in other states provided one major topic for the anti-Spartan propaganda. This discussion has shown that whatever elements of exaggeration, distortion, or even pure fabrication there are in the portrayals of the Spartan mothers turn out to reflect Greek ways of living and understanding after all.<sup>22</sup>

The fame of the Spartan mothers essentially illustrates in a different and radical way the domestic effect of the Greek exaltation of public and extrafamilial homosocial life. When the family was made the male citizens' secondary object of loyalty, Spartan women were valued first and foremost for contributing to the biological reproduction of the citizen class and for otherwise playing a positive role in public welfare (as demonstrated in the stories under discussion and in other stories about their influence in politics).<sup>23</sup> The high profile of the Spartan mothers does not put the family in the spotlight of Spartan life. As the Spartan citizen-soldiers spent most of their time in their military organizations and devoted themselves to the state and to one another, their wives and mothers fulfilled their own needs for companionship and emotional attachment mostly by associating with other women.<sup>24</sup>

### *At the Table*

In Book 4 of the *Odyssey*, when Telemakhos sails to Sparta to seek news about Odysseus, he finds King Menelaos holding a feast for the double wedding of his son and daughter. After being recognized as the son of Odysseus, Menelaos' dear comrade at Troy, Telemakhos dines with the king and his wife, Helen. The three shed many tears together as they

<sup>22</sup> Pomeroy (2002: 58); Millender (1999).

<sup>23</sup> On the high premium Spartans set on women's reproductive capacity and the various educational and eugenic policies they followed for making healthy mothers of strong offspring, see Pomeroy (2002, ch. 3). For other sources on Spartan women's influence in high politics, see Powell (1999).

<sup>24</sup> Pomeroy (2002: 44).

remember the sad war and the still missing Odysseus. To relieve their sorrows, Helen serves them a wondrous drug in the wine:

Whoever had drunk it down once it had been mixed in the wine bowl,  
for the day that he drank it would have no tear roll down his face,  
not if his mother died and his father died, not if men  
murdered a brother or a beloved son in his presence  
with the bronze, and he with his own eyes saw it.

(*Od.* 4.222–226; Lattimore 71)

If these words are jarring in the context of a wedding banquet, Helen has her use for the potion. When they have all drunk it, she begins to relate an encounter she had with Odysseus in the last days of the Trojan War. According to her tale, when Odysseus slipped into Troy in the guise of a beggar to carry out reconnaissance, she alone recognized him, received him with hospitality, and did not reveal him, because she longed to return to her native land and desired success for the Greek armies (*Od.* 4.242ff.). This account by the most beautiful woman in the world, whose abandonment of her husband caused the Trojan War, represents her attempt to bolster her reputation and to show loyalty to Menelaos. His reply when she finishes, however, offers a completely different version of the role Helen played in the same final episode of the ten-year strife. According to Menelaos, when the Greek warriors (himself and Odysseus included) were hiding in the Trojan Horse, Helen knew their contrivance, came to them, and tried to trick them out by mimicking their wives' voices and calling their names. All except Odysseus were eager to answer and come out, and it was thanks only to his strong will that they held back, and thus saved their own lives and brought about the fall of Troy (*Od.* 4. 265ff.). In other words, in Menelaos' version and contrary to Helen's claim about her regrets and her critical contribution to the Greek victory, Helen continued in her attempt to bring disaster to her own people until the very end of the war.

The *Odyssey* contains still another display of conjugal rivalry in front of a guest. In Book 11, at King Alkinoos' banquet, Queen Arete exhorts the Phaiakians to give Odysseus many gifts and not to send him off in haste, asserting that "he is my own guest, but each one of you has some part in honoring him" (*Od.* 11.338; Lattimore 177). Arete's urging draws two immediate responses, one from the old counselor Ekheneos and the other from Alkinoos himself. Ekheneos affirms the judgment of the queen but states clearly that "yet it is on Alkinoos here that word and



deed depend" (*Od.* 11.346; Loeb tr.).<sup>25</sup> Alkinoos' reply is also a pointed one. While declaring that Arete's plan has his consent, he deftly reminds everybody that *he* has *already* fixed tomorrow as the day of Odysseus' departure and asked his men to prepare gifts for the guest (*Od.* 7.317–318, 8.389–397). Then, directly addressing Arete's claim that Odysseus is her honored guest and everybody else simply joins her in extending hospitality to him, Alkinoos finishes his speech by saying, "the men shall see to his convoy / home, and I most of all; for mine is the power in this district" (*Od.* 11.352–353, Lattimore 177). In other words, as Alkinoos and his chiefs see it, Arete performs the managerial function in matters of hospitality,<sup>26</sup> but the power of decision rests with him and him only, or at least nominally so, for Arete's public assertiveness has compelled the men to attempt to readjust protocol.<sup>27</sup>

Just like the telling of competing stories by Menelaos and Helen in front of their guest, the rivalry between Alkinoos and Arete as host and hostess is none too subtle. We are reminded of the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope, where they test and trick each other, and also of the court sessions that Iskhomakhos holds with his wife at home in order to practice public speaking. There are huge differences between the three positively depicted wives and Helen, who receives highly mixed reviews in the Greek tradition (from being the femme fatale to being the bride par excellence),<sup>28</sup> but rivalry is what unites them all in defining their relationships with their husbands.

Menelaos, who was too captivated by Helen's beauty to punish her after the Trojan War, may be acting as the same infatuated husband when he disputes her tale in a mild albeit ironical tone. He starts by saying, "Yes, my wife, all this that you said is fair and orderly," but then continues with his own contradictory version (*Od.* 4.266; Lattimore 72). Alkinoos obviously shows deference to the high prestige that Arete enjoys in the family and among his people (at times she appears almost to be his coruler) when he tries to reassert his authority at the party. Saying that he approves of her plan, which is in keeping with the command he has

<sup>25</sup> Lattimore translates "From now on the word and the act belong to Alkinoos."

<sup>26</sup> In *Od.* 8.419–420, the gifts collected from the Phaiakians are brought to Arete for her to arrange and pack. In *Od.* 13.66–69, when Odysseus is about to embark on his final trip back to Ithaka, Arete sends three women bearing gifts, bread, and wine to his ship.

<sup>27</sup> On Alkinoos' effort to wrest control from Arete in the episode under discussion, see Martin (1993: 236) and Nagler (1993: 249).

<sup>28</sup> Hughes (2005).

already made, Alkinoos tries to remind everyone that he is the decision maker after all.

The sort of tactical disagreement adopted by Menelaos and Alkinoos may not be necessary when there is a stronger husband and when the wife does not enjoy the unusual status of Helen and Arete. This is hinted at by an incident in the banquet halls of Zeus on Mount Olympus. The episode occurs in Book 1 of the *Iliad*, when Hera finds Zeus in secret conversations with the goddess Thetis, Achilles' mother, at a gathering of the divine family. Immediately suspecting what Thetis has come to beg of Zeus (that he honor Achilles), Hera chides her husband thus:

So, who of the gods this time, my treacherous one,  
was hatching plans with you?  
Always your pleasure, whenever my back is turned,  
to settle things in your grand clandestine way.  
You never deign, do you, freely and frankly,  
to share your plots with me – never, not a word!

Zeus immediately responds to this open challenge to his authority, and the bard reports the fiery reply of the father of the gods:

Hera – stop hoping to fathom all my thoughts.  
You will find them a trial, though you are my wife.  
Whatever is right for you to hear, no one, trust me,  
will know of it before you, neither god nor man.  
Whatever I choose to plan apart from all the gods –  
no more of your everlasting questions, probe and pry no more.

(*Il.* 1.540–550; Fagles 95–96)

When Hera does not yield at Zeus' first expression of displeasure and continues to taunt him with what she knows about the pact between her husband and Thetis, he becomes cynical and threatens violence:

Maddening one . . . you and your eternal suspicions –  
I can never escape you. Ah but tell me, Hera,  
just what can you *do* about all this? Nothing.  
Only estrange yourself from me a little more –  
and all the worse for you.

If what you say is true, that must be my pleasure.  
Now go sit down. Be quiet now. Obey my orders,  
for fear the gods, however many Olympus holds,  
are powerless to protect you when I come  
to throttle you with my irresistible hands.

(*Il.* 1.561–567; Fagles 96–97)

Hera has been aptly called the prototypical Greek abandoned bride.<sup>29</sup> However, what that description may evoke – a solitary woman pathetically pining away for her husband – hardly applies to the queen of the Olympian gods, as is clear in the episode under discussion. This is only one of the numerous instances of Hera's public quarrels and secret wrangling with her estranged husband, whether over his numerous love affairs and the children born of them or because of her efforts not only to make her own independent plans but also to interfere in Zeus' schemes and decisions. Zeus may do as he pleases when out of the sight of his vigilant wife, but at home he can hardly hope to escape her surveillance, and the family dinner table becomes the all too natural site for a conjugal clash.

For Slater, whose controversial 1968 work is named after Hera, the chilly and contentious relationship between Hera and Zeus characterizes Greek marriages. However, when the Zeus–Hera relationship is juxtaposed with those of such idealized couples as Odysseus and Penelope, Alkinoos and Arete, and Iskhomakhos and his wife, the more convincing conclusion perhaps is that rivalry, whether viewed in a positive or a negative light, constituted a prominent dimension of Greek conceptions of conjugal relations. In positive portrayals, such rivalry could be enhanced into a partnership, even to the extent of completely assimilating conjugality into comradeship and turning the family into a mirror image of the public world of armies, assemblies, and courthouses. In negative representations, the same rivalry turns women into Amazons, husband murderers, and bossy busybodies, any one of which could spell misery for man.

That the divine quarrel takes place at a banquet table is revealed when, of all the gods who are terrified by Zeus' fits of temper, Hephaistos stands up and with wine cup in hand goes to comfort his mother. Pleading with her to concede, Hephaistos says that a fight between Hera and Zeus would mean "no more joy for us in the sumptuous feast" (*Il.* 575–576; Fagles 97). Hera accepts her loyal son's advice, smiling and taking the cup from his hands. The resolution of the tension between king and queen sees the resumption of the feast, which lasts all day.

In Hephaistos' speech to Hera, he begs her to yield to Zeus so that "our beloved Father will never wheel on us again, / send our banquets crashing" (*Il.* 1.578–579; Fagles 97). The fearful son remembers how wrangling between his parents has ruined earlier banquets, and he tries

<sup>29</sup> Redfield (1995: 182).

hard to prevent another such incident from happening. Hephaistos reminds Hera of what occurred when he tried to defend her during a previous confrontation between his parents: seized by Zeus and hurled from Olympus, he was permanently maimed and almost lost his life. Hephaistos' effort at persuasion succeeds with Hera, and in the rest of the *Iliad*, which shows the gods regularly feasting, his fears are not realized. In fact, the next time a serious quarrel breaks out between Zeus and Hera and Zeus again threatens violence, Hera deems it wise to comply at once. Leaving the father of the gods to himself, she joins the gods who are feasting on Olympus. When asked about her grave appearance, the queen gives a dreary account of her encounter with Zeus:

What fools we are, storming against Zeus – we're mad!  
And still we engage him, trying to block his way  
with a word or show of force. But there he sits,  
off and away – with never a care or qualm for us –  
claiming that he among the deathless gods on high  
is first in strength and power, none in the world his rival.

(*Il.* 15.104–108; Fagles 391)

In this aftermath of a conjugal conflict, the husband proceeds with his own business, while the disgruntled wife fills the ears of her children with complaints about their authoritarian and aloof father. Here is an opportunity to return to Slater's theory. As argued by Slater, the wife, who tends to fare worse in persistent marital conflicts, would vent her frustration with her husband on her son instead; in turn, the son would rebel against his mother's domination so that he could free himself to join the adult male community. A different picture, however, emerges from the preceding analysis of a confrontation at an Olympian banquet. There Hera and Hephaistos, the mother and son, form an alliance of the weak against Zeus, their husband and father; the son cares about his mother and tries to protect her, both by coming to her defense and by advising her on a wise strategy for survival. Because this is a divine family that has no life cycle (i.e., after Zeus seized the throne from his father, Kronos, who had deposed his own father, Ouranos) makes it impossible to test whether a time will come for the son to renounce his mother's influence over him. However, if, for whatever reason, a son like Hephaistos does reject his mother, it will not be because he has come to resent her power and domination. How could he, after repeatedly seeing her punished and terrorized for challenging her husband? Such may be the paradox of the nonidealized image of the Greek wife: she is

contentious and strong, but at the same time has been silenced and is powerless.

It is far from desirable to perceive Greek domestic convivial life through the lens of the events in the halls of Zeus. But, in the absence of more evidence showing mortals at family feasts, we are compelled to believe that the Greeks projected their experiences and feelings onto their gods' perpetual festivities. Thus the god's banquets, while being an important symbol of the blessed state of the divine, could also be made to reflect the dramas of earthly domestic feasts. Just as he sits down in Menelaos' banquet hall, Telemakhos is so amazed by its ornateness that he cannot help but whisper to his travel companion that Zeus' court must be like it (*Od.* 4.71–75). Perhaps there are also many parallels between Olympic scenes and what Telemakhos will witness between Menelaos and Helen.

We do owe a precious description of an ordinary family feast to Menander (ca. 342–291 BCE), the comic playwright. His *Peevish Fellow* (*dyskolos*), which is about how a young man named Sostratos manages to marry the girl he loves by overcoming the hatred of her misthanthropic father, is set against the background of a sacrifice that Sostratos' mother conducts for the god Pan. The 1959 publication of this virtually complete play has greatly enhanced our understanding of Greek family life. This means that we can now identify among the domestic convivialists more than just gods, goddesses (Helen, who is Zeus' daughter, is a half-goddess), and legendary chiefs. We will see whether anything links the hall of Olympos, the palaces of Phaiakia and Mykenaian Sparta, and the suburbs of Hellenistic Athens.

In a scene set at Pan's shrine in the countryside, members of the family appear in a staggered order. Sostratos is the first to show up; as he enters, he is already declaring to his friend Khaireas that he has fallen in love, at first sight, with a girl he has just seen in the neighborhood (line 50ff.). The play's next 340 or so lines are devoted to how Sostratos contrives to win the heart of the girl's father, Knemon, who has ferociously rejected the young man's proposal to marry his daughter. Next the cook arrives to prepare for the day's sacrifice. Forty lines after the cook's arrival, near the middle of the play, Sostratos' mother and unmarried younger sister appear, accompanied by a hired female entertainer. After his mother is shown giving orders to the two family servants, the female company recedes into the background, leaving the stage to Sostratos, who continues his mission to win Knemon's consent. By about line 760, Knemon has given up his resistance and allowed his

son Gorgias to betroth his daughter to Sostratos (Knemon is too resentful of human beings to arrange it himself). Just at this point, Sostratos' father, Kallippides, a rich farmer, makes his belated entrance, worrying that he has missed the party (lines 775–776). Sostratos tells Kallippides that they have indeed already eaten but that his share has been put aside for him (line 780). While the father eats, Sostratos talks to him, not only easily getting Kallippides to approve Sostratos' betrothal but also managing to persuade him to give his daughter to Gorgias, who has lent Sostratos crucial support in dealing with Knemon. Now that the two betrothals have been made, a party is called for to be held that night to celebrate, and the play ends with festivities and a slapstick episode.

Although the feast in Menander's play is a family event, its conduct does not aim to assert any particular family order or to reinforce the ties between its members. The participants arrive separately and they are not shown together until the end, when the originally planned event of the day is long over and they are getting ready for the betrothal celebration. Sostratos' mother makes her first appearance in the company of her daughter, and they must also have eaten together, but the two men of the family seem to have treated the meal as an occasion to get a quick bite before they can be off to other things again. Sostratos is of course completely absorbed with his love affair, and it is not clear whether he joins his mother and sister for the meal or just grabs his reserved portion, like Kallippides, when he takes a break from tackling his difficult future father-in-law. The father's appearance after everybody else has eaten and his anxiety about having missed the entire party are interesting.

The father's late arrival may be proper to a prosperous farmer, who might be so busy overseeing the slaves working on his farm or going to the agora to make deals that he does not have time to join in a family event that arises from his wife's religious piety.<sup>30</sup> Kallippides' fear that the celebrants had already left for home without waiting for him may be taken as an indication of his irrelevance to the event. Finally, and perhaps most important, the father is late because he must be out of the way so that Sostratos can occupy center stage. It is all right for the mother to stay in the background throughout her appearance in the play (Sostratos is never shown consulting her), but the audience would find it unconvincing if the son, while engaging in his romantic pursuit,

<sup>30</sup> Xenophon's *Oikonomikos*, which offers the most detailed descriptions of a model farmer's life, likewise emphasizes that Iskhomakhos spends most of his time either at the farm or in the agora.

were to entirely ignore his father. The coincidence in the timing of Kallippides' first appearance and Sostratos' success with Knemon is strong support for this last point, and I propose to take it further. The reason Kallippides shows up late basically to endorse all that Sostratos has done on his own initiative is that the play concerns that phase of a Greek family's life cycle in which parents make way for their sons' newly formed conjugal units. The dominance of the romantic theme in New Comedy may be a reflection of the sociopolitical and intellectual changes of Hellenistic times,<sup>31</sup> but the conjugal relationship, including its facets of love, intimacy, conflict, and estrangement, was always at the center of Greek notions of the family order.<sup>32</sup> In having the father arrive near the close of the play and approve of the betrothal as a *fait accompli*, Menander simply takes it to an extreme in a literary medium.

Only the immortal Zeus can be both the eternal cause of his estranged wife's complaint and the ever-powerful father who experiences no regime change with his son's marriage. In *The Peevish Fellow*, that inevitable dissolution of the old family order is dramatized in a domestic convivial context, which sees the banqueters unassembled, the son actively pursuing his happiness, the mother almost completely in the background, and the father given a role of ceremonial authority. The image of the mother in the play deserves notice. She has no role at all in the actions that Sostratos takes on his own initiative and later reports to Kallippides for approval. Of course, this is a play, and although New Comedy tends to be valued for its verisimilitude and attention to daily life (vs. the absurdities and political concerns of Aristophanic Old Comedy), it should also be read for the imagination and the ideals that it expresses. Rather than take the virtual nonexistence of the mother

<sup>31</sup> The significant change in the sociopolitical ethos that occurred as the Greek city-states lost their political independence under the Hellenistic kingdoms has been characterized as a move from the "primacy of politics" to the "primacy of the social" (C. B. Patterson 1998: 224–225).

<sup>32</sup> As Redfield (1995: 159) notes, Menander's *Peevish Fellow* does not represent a "tentative first attempt at a love story" but is "already a developed example of the genre" in the Greek literary tradition. Observing that "it is as if such stories had been latently present throughout," Redfield points to the romantically described encounter between Odysseus and Nausikaa the Phaiakian princess in the *Odyssey's* Books 6 and 7. In fact, the encounter in the epic between Odysseus and Penelope leading up to their final reunion is also depicted with strong romantic overtones such that it has been described as "a second wooing of a wife by her husband and of a husband by his wife" (Felson 1994: 63). Against the common view that romantic love began to be associated with married life only in the modern West, Hagstrum (1992) delineates what he calls a "countertradition" of romantic love in marriage in Western literature beginning with the portrayals of Odysseus and Penelope in Homer.

in the play as evidence that mothers had no say in their children's marriages, we shall read it in light of the general obscurity of the mother's image in Greek literature.

No woman has an important role in the play or even seems to have a speaking part. All the major action of the play takes place among the men of the two families, as Sostratos, with the assistance of Gorgias, deals with Knemon and obtains Kallippides' approval afterwards. The female characters, including Sostratos' mother and sister and Gorgias' mother and sister, gather for the betrothal feast at the end, but even then they have only an implied presence, as the men crack hoary jokes about women's bibulousness. Kallippides and Sostratos first joke about it when they discuss the arrangements for the celebration. Later, when the party is underway, the cook comments that the female guests are drinking wine like beach sand absorbing seawater (lines 857–860, 949). Even if he does not show the women acting in their roles as mothers, wives, and sisters in this domestic play, Menander does not forgo the opportunity to portray them in the stereotypical image of the gastronomic Woman.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the different social context for Menander's play and its new concerns, it continues a tradition in Greece insofar as our interests are concerned. First, the family banquet is not deliberately presented as the embodiment of good family order. Second, the play retains the dominant concern with the marital relationship, the central axis in the Greek conception of family order. In the spotlight are the developments leading up to the formation of a new conjugal unit, and the plot dramatizes the beginning of the marginalization of the parents–children relationship. Finally, the organization of the domestic festivity along gender lines lends itself to articulating the view that women, regardless of their family roles, form a group with common qualities that set them apart from men.<sup>34</sup> The family banquet furnishes an occasion for the revelers to reinforce their consciousness of gender difference at the same time as it serves its purported function of creating solidarity among male and female relatives.

### *Behind the Scenes*

Greek misogyny finds vivid expression in representations of conjugal interaction during men's festivities in the home. In his typology of the

<sup>33</sup> The conventional traits of women in Old and New Comedy include gluttony, bibulousness, and a fondness for sex (Just 1989, ch. 8; Venit 1998).

<sup>34</sup> The concept of Woman as a distinct and potentially antagonistic species runs deep in the Greek tradition (LLoyd-Jones 1975; Loraux 1993, ch. 2). The best manifestations



female race, Semonides, the seventh-century poet BCE from Samos, leads the charge against the uncooperative wife:

Whenever a man seems to be especially enjoying himself in his home,  
 either through divine dispensation or the kindness of men,  
 she finds fault and puts on her helmet for battle.  
 For where there is a woman,  
 men may not readily welcome even a stranger who has come to the house.  
 (Semonides 7, lines 103–107)

Conflict between husband and wife characterizes the preceding passage. It is shown in the parallel narrative structures of their actions (he does vs. she does). The comparison of the wife to a warrior who puts on her helmet drives home the agonistic nature of the interaction. Whereas the husband is portrayed as a gregarious man who sometimes wishes to fulfill his completely just desire to have a normal social life, the wife is depicted as having as her sole purpose to make him and his friends unhappy by loudly asserting her presence. Bearing in mind that the fights between Hera and Zeus habitually end with his threatening (and at times using) force, we should perhaps refrain from judging who is victim and who victimizer in the Semonides poem but just take it for what it is: a complaint alleging a female vice that an eloquent man lodges on behalf of all his brethren.

Two anecdotes recorded by Plutarch corroborate the perception in Semonides' sweeping satire. One story concerns Socrates and his shrewish wife, Xanthippe. Socrates once brought a friend home for dinner after they finished at the wrestling school. While the two men were eating, Xanthippe scolded them roundly, and finally overturned the table. The other story relates to the similar treatment that Pittakos, the tyrant of Mytilene and one of the legendary seven sages, received from his wife.

of such thinking in the early literature can be found in two places: the description of the birth of Pandora the first female, which creates a generic problem for men (Hesiod, *Theogony* 570–589; *Work and Days* 60–80), and Semonides' long poem on women, whose existence he laments as "the worst plague Zeus has made" (*Zeus gar megiston tout' epoiēsen kakon*) (fr. 7, lines 96–97, and again line 115). Virtuous women like Penelope and the only good woman in Semonides' poem were treated as exceptions to their species (Lloyd-Jones 1975). Instead of an indictment of the notorious Greek misogyny, my point here is to demonstrate the Greek tendency to conceive of women as a separate and distinct tribe. Given male domination, for women to be categorized as the Other of course easily gave rise to negative characterizations, but that was not always the case, and the same habits of thinking often found good-humored and much milder expression in the comedies.

While Pittakos and his guests were gathering, his wife entered in great anger and upset the table (*On the Control of Anger* 461d, 471).

The fact that the male protagonists in Plutarch's stories were two quintessential Greek wise men adds philosophical coloring to the pessimism in Semonides' lampoon of women. The husband needs dinners and parties to forge social ties, but the wife refuses to see the necessity and importance of each and every occasion and does not hesitate to take senseless offense. Indeed, Plutarch gives little thought to what could have provoked the violent actions of the two wives. As he saw it, Xanthippe's outrage apparently was just one of the numerous fits of bad temper with which her husband lived, and Pittakos' wife was simply acting as a haughty woman of noble birth (*On the Control of Anger* 461d, 471). The only good way to deal with such unreasonable creatures is to endure them with good grace. That is Plutarch's recommendation as he tells the stories about Pittakos and Socrates in his discourse on how to deal with difficult and embarrassing situations. Both husbands reacted to the row caused by their wives with calm and humor. In one case, Socrates' guest was deeply offended, got up, and was about to leave, when the philosopher said, "At your house the other day did not a hen fly in and do precisely this same thing, yet we were not put out about it?" In the other, Pittakos tried to appease his guests thus, "Everyone of us has some trouble. He that has only mine is doing very well indeed." We do not know how the guests on both occasions took the efforts of their hosts, but presumably the humor worked well not only in resolving the embarrassment but also in establishing a good rapport among them. Being men, they all had to face the same question, "What can you do about a wife, or a hen?"

The humor of Socrates and Pittakos, like Semonides' satire, may be understood as Greek men's attempts to cope with their wives in an area where the women's cooperation was required and their resistance would make things difficult. We may imagine both the poem and the anecdotes being circulated at a symposium. The man whose warlike wife begrudges him any festive delights shares his grievances with his companions. As his audience includes husbands like the speaker himself, the articulation of his problem and his self-caricature would gain him sympathy without reflecting badly on his public image. Moreover, the ridicule of females could serve as a swift and pleasant means to facilitate male bonding. Whatever different backgrounds a group of men might possess, the fact that they all have difficult wives to deal with unites them.

Greek sources do not always show women as fastidious and ferocious hostesses and their kinsmen as victims who could only grumble and take their grievances elsewhere. In the *Odyssey*, Penelope intrudes into the male convivial scene on several occasions; for her action she is rebuffed by her son, and, true to her reputation as a female paragon, every time she yields to him without protest.

The first time this happens is in Book 1, when the carousing suitors are about to turn to musical entertainment after they have eaten and drunk their fill. Phemios, the minstrel, is bidden to sing of the woeful return of the Greek heroes from the Trojan War. Penelope hears the song, and she comes downstairs from her chamber. Homer carefully takes note of her modesty, describing her as being attended by two maids instead of coming down alone (*Od.* 1.331). As the veiled and escorted Penelope stands by the doorpost of the hall, she tearfully entreats Phemios to change the subject of his song because it breaks her heart to think of her absent husband. Her plea draws a sharp response from Telemakhos. The youth asks his mother to brace her heart to listen to the song, because it is Zeus' arbitrary wish that makes men toil and suffer and Odysseus is not the only one to have perished as the Greeks return from the Trojan War. If this can still count as consolation, Telemakhos' concluding remarks have to be considered a lecture:

Go therefore back in the house, and take up your own work,  
the loom and the distaff, and see to it that your handmaidens  
ply their work also; but the men must see to discussion,  
all men, but I most of all. For mine is the power in this household.

(*Od.* 1.356–359; Lattimore 36)

Telemakhos admonishes Penelope by the principle of the sexual division of space and labor, and the mother, though astonished, takes her son's admonishment to heart and turns on her heel. Clearly, there is reason in his rebuke despite his harsh tone, and, as a modest woman, she deems it wise to comply.

What happens in Book 1 is repeated in Book 21, which relates the famous archery contest. As we learn from the end of Book 20, the contest is set up by Penelope after she overhears conversations between the suitors and Telemakhos. Judging that Telemakhos is now old enough to take over the house and that she should leave in order to end the suitors' perpetual pestering, she announces that she will marry the man who can string Odysseus' huge bow and shoot an arrow through twelve axes. Like in Book 1, she makes this announcement by appearing in

front of the dining hall, with a veil over her face and a maidservant on each side.

Several suitors, including Eurymakhos, one of their leaders, have tried the bow without success. At this point, Odysseus, still in disguise, asks that he be granted an opportunity, too. When his request draws angry reactions from the suitors, Penelope speaks out for him, arguing that allowing this stranger a chance will make everyone happy and will do no harm because it is impossible for her to marry the beggarly stranger even if he should have good luck with the bow. To her intervention Telemakhos first replies that he alone has the authority to decide the question, and then he says the following:

Go therefore back in the house, and take up your own work,  
the loom and the distaff, and see to it that your handmaidens  
ply their work also. The men shall have the bow in their keeping,  
all men, but I most of all. For mine is the power in this household.

(*Od.* 21.350–353; Lattimore 318)

Emphasizing his own authority on the one hand and pointing out to Penelope her proper sphere on the other, Telemakhos once again puts an end to the mother–son confrontation. Telemakhos' tendency to make sharp rejoinders has been explained in terms of the irritable adolescent psyche.<sup>35</sup> Such a reading ignores the fact that Penelope has helped bring about a direct confrontation with her son by repeatedly intruding into the male convivial space. It seems that she finds no channel for expressing and enforcing her intentions other than by such invasions. Her action allows and perhaps compels Telemakhos to invoke his male privileges to overcome the deference that a son owes his mother. Whereas he has on his side well-established social principles, she has no recourse to any ideology that would put the mother in a position of authority over her son in the present situation. Penelope's reaction to Telemakhos' refutation on both occasions – amazement followed by compliance – is only to be expected of an exemplary woman like her.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Stanford (1959, ad. loc.)

<sup>36</sup> Nagler (1993: 249–250) interprets the two speeches that Telemakhos addresses to Penelope in the same light as those by which Alkinoos and Ekheneos attempt to take the decision-making powers from Arete and restore them to the king. Nagler calls them “women's place” speeches that aim at defining male prerogatives in activities that range from hospitality to discourse to fighting.

The difference between Penelope and the combative women who ruin their kinsmen's social gatherings seems to be that Penelope realizes her faux pas and makes amends promptly when reminded of her proper place, whereas the other wives show no regard for decorum. Penelope's ready yielding to Telemakhos may have appeared quite in keeping with her virtuous character in the eyes of the Greeks. To them, boys will grow up to fight and deliberate in the company of their fellow champions and citizens and to exercise authority as masters at home. Telemakhos' confrontations with Penelope in the banquet hall can be seen as a critical juncture in a promising Greek young man's preparation for the outside world.<sup>37</sup> We do not know whether Penelope was ever an authority figure for a younger Telemakhos. The way mother and son interact since the first book of the *Odyssey*, however, reminds us of the family banquet in Menander's *Peevish Fellow*, where the mother is a marginalized figure who is virtually irrelevant to her son's preoccupations.<sup>38</sup> It may not be a long road that separates the repeatedly rebuffed Penelope of Homer's epic and the mute, nameless mother in Menander's romantic comedy.

## China

### *Gender Configuration in the Family: Mothers, Sons, and Daughters-in-Law*

Though the father clearly was regarded as the highest authority in the Chinese family, the requisites of filial piety, which was a foundational virtue in both the familial and the political realms in Zhou ideology, also gave the mother a great measure of power in the family. Like her Greek counterpart, the Chinese mother could also appear as the sympathetic object of care, as in the soldiers' complaint in Ode 185 ("Qǐ fū," Minister of War) that the war prevents them from providing for their mothers. However, the authoritative role that the Chinese mother

<sup>37</sup> This understanding is perfectly illustrated by Knox's (1996: 52) reading of the first confrontation between Telemakhos and Penelope, "[Telemakhos] has been raised by women, Eurykleia [the loyal old nurse] and Penelope, and it was almost inevitable that his normal adolescent rebellion would be against his mother. The first result of Athena's move to rouse Odysseus' son 'to a braver pitch, inspire his heart with courage' (1.105) is this stern dismissal of his mother as he asserts his mastery in the house."

<sup>38</sup> Telemakhos embarks on the search for news of his father with his age-mates and without the knowledge of Penelope, and he is not shown consulting with his mother or informing her about the plans that he, Odysseus, and their servants make for the destruction of the suitors (see Chapter 1).

is frequently shown playing and the degree to which piety to the mother was an ethical imperative in Zhou China set the two traditions apart.

A famous story that takes place in the first year recorded in *Zuo's Commentary* illustrates the moral force carried by piety to the Chinese mother. According to the account, Duke Zhuang of Zheng (r. 743–701 BCE) was estranged from his mother after she had tried to install her favorite younger son as heir and later collaborated with him in a failed coup to overthrow the duke. The duke soon regretted having vowed never to see his mother again, and was able to achieve a graceful reconciliation with her thanks to the remonstrance of an official named Ying Kaoshu. The historian calls Ying a “pure paragon of filial piety 純孝也” and praises him for “extending his love for his mother to his ruler 愛其母施及莊公” (*Zuo*, Yin 1, Yang 15; whole story, Yang 10–16). It seems that, in the eyes of the historian (who poses as a voice for public morality), of Ying Kaoshu, and, less unambiguously, of Duke Zhuang himself, filial piety was such a fundamental moral and sociopolitical principle that it should not be forgone because of a parent's wrongdoing.

The authority that the mother is portrayed as wielding in China is impressive in comparison with the mother's authority in Greece. Early Chinese texts abound with the images of mothers who teach, make demands on, or receive service and respect from their sons. One Chinese mother who stands out because of the frequency and strictness with which she is said to have instructed her son is Jing Jiang of Lu. In fact, Jing Jiang is perhaps also the woman whose life we know the most about from the early sources.<sup>39</sup> Importantly, almost all the didactic encounters between Jing Jiang and her son are recorded as having taken place when he was already a high official in Lu. In one story, she offers her son some advice on the art of governance. In another, she scolds him when he tries to make her give up weaving, which in his eyes is not fit for a matron of her status but for her stands for the essential female work. In the third story, she expels her son from home for five days after she learns about his inappropriate treatment of a guest in their house.<sup>40</sup>

In short, in the Chinese sources the mother–son relationship is a key domestic relationship regulated by the principle of filial piety. A high value is set on the son's obedience, gratitude, and responsibility, and the

<sup>39</sup> Raphals (1998: 92) offers a chart of the early sources on Jing Jiang.

<sup>40</sup> The first story is recorded in the *Biographies of Women* (LNZ 1.6b–8b), a first-century BCE anthology of didactic stories about women from the beginning of Chinese history onward. The second story (discussed in Chapter 3) and the third (to be analyzed shortly) are found in the *Discourses of the States*.

mother, especially a widow with an adult son, often appears as a strong figure. On both counts – the mother's prescribed position of authority in the family institution and the positive view of the mother's wielding of her authority – the Chinese mother seems to have enjoyed a status of much greater prominence and importance in the family order than her Greek counterpart.

The preceding statement must not be taken to mean that it was not part of Greek social expectations for sons to respect and to provide assistance to their parents. Evidence to the contrary is firm and plenty. For example, Hesiod believes that only in the decadent age of iron (preceded by the ages of gold, silver, etc.) did men begin to dishonor their aged parents and refuse to repay them the cost of their nurture. Also, at interviews for some public offices in classical Athens, one question asked candidates was whether they had failed to honor their parents.<sup>41</sup> So far as a comparison is concerned, a major distinction seems to lie in the different hierarchies in which a man's various roles were arranged and perceived. In China a man's filial identity anchored and preceded his public identities, whereas in Greece a good citizen, successful farmer, and qualified public officer also should be a dutiful son. This point about the relative hierarchy between the family and the extradomestic domain in ancient China and Greece has already been made in Chapter 2. Here I shall try to shed more light on it by comparing the status accorded the Chinese mother and the legendary authority enjoyed by her Spartan counterpart.

At first glance, the resolve and relentlessness with which the Spartan mothers carry out the public shaming and even killing of their cowardly sons in Plutarch's stories (discussed earlier) certainly makes them no less authoritative than their Chinese counterparts. However, there is a crucial distinction between the Chinese and Spartan images. The stories about the Spartan mother show her wielding her authority when it concerns her son's duty to the state; they are never about the son's obligations and obedience to her as a son. By contrast, the Chinese son's filial piety is envisioned first of all within the familial context and is focused on his mother. The son's fulfillment of his filial duties is regarded as the basis of his other duties as a social being. Whereas the Spartan mother's authority essentially reflects the supreme claim that the Spartan state has on its citizens' loyalty, the Chinese mother's right to her son's love

<sup>41</sup> *Works and Days* 185–189; *Memorabilia* II.ii.13; Morrow (1960: 216); C. B. Patterson (1998: 78).

and obedience could be made in the name of the mother. A good son serves his mother with devotion, and the deeds that demonstrate his filial piety can range from bringing her delicacies, to saving food for her although himself starving, to forgiving her attempts to harm him, to listening to her instructions, to yielding to her demands in different matters (more instances of which will be discussed shortly). In various ways, the Chinese mother is constantly shown playing a crucial role in the construction of the patrilineal and patriarchal family order, the foundation of China's sociopolitical model.

In the Chinese family order, not only the son but also the son's wife (and his other consorts, too<sup>42</sup>) is expected to submit to his mother's authority. Theoretically, the wife's duty to her parents-in-law is secondary to what binds her to her husband. However, in view of the supreme imperative of filial piety imposed on her husband, she is expected to be gradually assimilated into the same chain of authority and obligation if the parents-children tie is to be upheld as the most fundamental family bond. Ideally, the mother-in-law would be affectionate toward the daughter-in-law and the daughter-in-law would be obedient to the mother-in-law 姑慈婦聽.<sup>43</sup> In reality, however, the demands on the younger woman would undoubtedly be much more onerous and the mother-in-law's exercise of authority perhaps would inevitably cause hostility and conflict between the two women, who might have been strangers previously but now who lived in close quarters and consciously or unconsciously vied for the attention and loyalty of the same man (the older woman's son and the younger woman's husband). It is perhaps precisely because of the importance of the relationship between the two women and the uncertainty inherent in it that the sources make a strong discursive effort to forge a bond between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law that rests on the former's authority and the latter's filial piety.

Efforts to legitimize the mother-in-law's authority over her son's wife strongly emphasized that the mother had earned her current position by successfully passing the hard but honorable test of being a daughter-in-law herself. The most eminent historical example of the continuum between the two stages in a woman's life cycle is Tai Si, the queen of King

<sup>42</sup> Polygyny and Chinese conjugal dynamics will be discussed in the next section, but for the purpose of discussing the *hierarchical* relationship between a mother-in-law and her daughters-in-law, all the daughters-in-law can be broadly treated as one category.

<sup>43</sup> This is according to the ethical principles stated in *Zuo's Commentary* (Zhao 26, Yang 4: 1480).



Wen. Ode 240 (“Si zhai,” Great Dignity), which sings about Zhou’s rise from a chieftom to a kingdom reigning over China, opens with praise of its three founders’ queens, Tai Ren, Zhou Jiang, and Tai Si. Whereas Tai Ren is noted for her elevated manners and Zhou Jiang for her illustrious virtue, Tai Si receives praise for learning from her mother-in-law and grandmother-in-law and for perpetuating their good names (lines 1–6).<sup>44</sup> In an important sense, Tai Si, the virtuous wife of King Wen, attained her prominent status in Chinese history by acquitting her two other roles well: as a good daughter-in-law in her early life and as a good mother (and mother-in-law) when the time came.<sup>45</sup>

The continuity between the roles of daughter- and mother-in-law as illustrated by Tai Si finds another example in Jing Jiang. Generally portrayed in the sources as a strict and dignified matron (see Chapter 3), Jing Jiang is manifestly proud of the fact that she was once a pious daughter-in-law, and she frequently pays tribute to the memory of her deceased parents-in-law. In an encounter with her grand nephew Ji Kangzi, the chief minister of Lu for over twenty years (491–468 BCE), who in the texts is repeatedly described as a recipient of Jing Jiang’s moral instructions,<sup>46</sup> Jing Jiang is pressed by Ji Kangzi to impart to him some teachings. Eventually Jing Jiang offers him a saying of her deceased mother-in-law on how a gentleman can make his lineage prosper by industrious work. When Zixia (b. 507 BCE), one of Confucius’ favorite students, hears about this exchange, he praises Jing Jiang for exemplifying the ancient teaching that wives should learn from their parents-in-law (*Guoyu*, Lu 2, 202).

Jing Jiang’s quotation of her mother-in-law’s words shows that a good daughter-in-law was supposed to fully identify with her husband’s family by cultivating spiritual allegiance to his parents, especially to his mother, to whom fell the task of schooling and naturalizing the newcomer.<sup>47</sup> In expressing his approval of Jing Jiang, Zixia quotes an unspecified source to say that the ancients considered it a misfortune for a woman if her parents-in-law had died before she married into the house, because in that case she would have no chance to learn

<sup>44</sup> Cheng and Jiang 773; Waley 235. Waley’s translation: “Great dignity had Tairen, / The mother of King Wen; / Well loved was Lady Jiang of Zhou, / Bride of the high house. / And Tai Si carried on their fair name, / Bearing a multitude of sons.”

<sup>45</sup> See Chen Chao-Jung (2007) and Xie Naihe (2008) for the inscriptional evidence on the backgrounds and activities of the Zhou queens.

<sup>46</sup> Raphals (2001).

<sup>47</sup> An incident in which Jing Jiang quoted the words of her deceased father-in-law to discipline her son will be discussed.

from them (*Guoyu*, Lu 2, 202).<sup>48</sup> While in the Greek family order the mother-in-law is a marginal figure and the husband functions as the wife's teacher, the Chinese mother stands as a pillar in the ideal family scheme. The power of her authority and the influence of her virtue are supposed to rally the younger wives behind her for the common cause of family prosperity.<sup>49</sup> The intelligent, eloquent, and authoritative mothers and mothers-in-law were praised for the good upbringing they gave their sons and for their impeccable administration of their houses. Those women reached this point after having been powerless brides and then young mothers themselves and gradually moving to center stage.<sup>50</sup>

*Gender Configuration in the Family: Husband–Wife*

In more than one sense the conjugal relationship in the Chinese family was more complicated than it was in the Greek family. In the first place, it tended to be viewed as part of the web of interpersonal relationships in the extended family and in particular to be subordinated to the parents–children bond. In the second place, the common practice of polygyny made the marriage literally more “crowded.”

The *Book of Rites* teaches that a man should love or divorce his wife entirely depending on whether his parents liked or disapproved of her and regardless of his own feelings (“*Nei ze*,” *Liji* 1463). Such a view of the parents' absolute control over the status of their son's wife does not find support in the sources pertaining to the period of this study. It is true, however (as already pointed out), that the wife, by virtue of her subordination to her husband and because of the supreme dictate of

<sup>48</sup> In her discussion of the traditional peasant household in twentieth-century China, Johnson (1983: 21) mentions that often while mothers were dreaming of docile, hard-working daughters-in-law, young women were dreaming of being married to a man who had no mother.

<sup>49</sup> There was also tension between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law in the Greek household, as can be seen in Terence's (ca. 195–159 BCE), Roman comedy, *The Mother-in-law*, which Terence adapted from a play by the Greek comedian Apollodoros (300–260 BCE). At the end of the Terence play, the mother proposes that she move out of her son's house to eliminate the cause for any future disagreements with her daughter-in-law. As the father points out, and the mother agrees, she is at an age when a young woman would find her tiresome and she had better leave so that no one could blame her for anything (IV. ii, iii). It seems that the tension between the two women was viewed as a personal and relatively minor problem in Greek family relationships and did not require a systemic search for resolution. There was never any effort to establish the mother-in-law in a position of great authority over her sons' wives.

<sup>50</sup> Discussions of stories about the wise and authoritative mothers in *Zuo's Commentary* and *Discourses of the States* may be found in Raphals (1998, ch. 2).

filial piety binding on him, was expected to identify with her husband's obligations and feelings and to submit to his parents' authority with obedience and love. The attempt to forge a harmonious relationship based on the parents-in-law's authority and the wife's obedience was corroborated by an effort to make ceremonious distance the governing principle in conjugal interaction. Whereas expressions of filial sentiments were treated with approval and encouragement, the public demonstration of conjugal intimacy was subject to suspicion and injunction. Jing Jiang, the model woman who was applauded for her commemoration of her mother-in-law, elsewhere received praise for her proper display of sadness in mourning her dead husband. By weeping for him only during the day (the time of work and public scrutiny) and not during the night (the time of rest and solitude), Jing Jiang painstakingly conveyed the impression that her feelings for her husband were in full compliance with ritual prescription and free from suggestions of improper intimacy.<sup>51</sup>

The ideal that a husband and wife should treat each other with ceremonious courtesy found its earliest textual expression in a *Zuo's Commentary* record about a couple living in seventh-century BCE Jin. Ji Que, the scion of an illustrious lineage, had been reduced to humble station because of his father's political downfall. Ji Que now worked in the field himself, and his wife brought him lunch. One day, a Jin minister on a diplomatic mission happened to pass by as Ji Que's wife came into the field to deliver her husband's meal. After observing how the couple "treated each other like guests 相待如賓," the minister took Ji Que back with him and persuaded the duke to appoint him to a high position in the court. According to the minister who had witnessed the respectful attitude Ji Que and his wife demonstrated toward each other, such reverence convinced him that Ji Que was a virtuous person and would serve as a good shepherd of the people.<sup>52</sup> The inference that the minister drew from what he saw in the field indicates not only that the Chinese held ceremoniousness to be the ideal in conjugal relationship but also that

<sup>51</sup> This narrative is found only in the *Book of Rites* and the *Biographies of Women*, both of which were compiled in the Han from earlier sources. The fact that all other Jing Jiang tales in the *Biographies of Women* exhibit a high degree of narrative and ideological conformity with their versions in the *Discourses of the States* makes it likely that this account reflects the mores of earlier times (at least of the period of its composition, which was the fourth century BCE, if not of the date of its setting, which was the sixth century BCE). The point illustrated with this story will be borne out by the example that follows.

<sup>52</sup> *Zuo*, Xi 33, Yang 501–503.

an intimate connection was perceived to exist between public virtue and domestic conduct (be it between parents and children or husband and wife) and that the latter was the foundation if not guarantee of the former (a notion that was at odds with the Greek sequence of virtues).

The upholding of ceremonious distance does not conflict with an important aspect of ideal Chinese wifehood, namely, that the wife should be a supportive and useful helpmate to her husband. For example, the three queens of the early Zhou, in particular Tai Si, the wife of King Wen, were highly praised for the contributions they made to the rise of the kingdom. In addition, in *Zuo's Commentary*, the wife of a Jin aristocrat named Bozong is favorably portrayed for advising him not to speak freely at court. In another instance, the wife of Xi Fuji, a Cao aristocrat, is credited with helping her husband win the friendship and gratitude of a prince in exile who would one day become a powerful interstate leader.<sup>53</sup>

So far Chinese conjugal dynamics have been discussed as if they involved the relationship between a husband and a wife. In fact, however, as has been brought up on a number of occasions already, Chinese rulers and high-ranking nobility widely practiced polygyny, and a man commonly had both a principal wife and consorts who were of secondary status. It would be helpful to compare such a practice with concubinage in Greece, in which upper-class and well-to-do men commonly kept more or less permanent sexual partners called *pallakai* (usually translated as concubines) in addition to their lawful wives (*gynaikes*).

In Chinese polygyny a man married multiple women of differential statuses either simultaneously or at different times. The differentiation of status among the brides, above all between the principal wife and the secondary consorts, would define the differential statuses among the offspring born and thus uphold the political, economic, and ritual privileges regulated by Lineage Law.<sup>54</sup> The regular coexistence of multiple formally married female consorts in the Chinese elite family can be understood in terms of two essential needs of the family: to acquire offspring and to obtain outside alliances. Compared to the complex and fully institutionalized practice of Chinese polygyny, Greek concubinage

<sup>53</sup> The stories of these two women will be analyzed below. Both women later found a place in the first-century BCE *Biographies of Women*, alongside the stories of many other wives from across Chinese history who helped their husbands make decisions and correct mistakes (see Raphals 1998).

<sup>54</sup> Cao Wei (2000); Cao Zhaolan (2004: 150–176); Cui Mingde (2004); Jia Junxia (2002); She Shusheng (1993); Thatcher (1991).

was a much less well-defined institution. A Greek man would not acquire several concubines along with a sole “legitimate wife” at the same time.<sup>55</sup> The Greek concubine, generally of foreign origin and slave status but occasionally from an impoverished citizen family, was not formally given in marriage (as the wife was) and her position essentially depended on a strictly personal relationship with the man. She was usually set up in a separate residence (though sometimes brought to the man’s home). Bearing legitimate heirs was not the stated or primary purpose for her acquisition.<sup>56</sup> The sentiment that a good marriage consisted of a husband and a wife found early expressions in the epics. In the *Iliad* (9.450), Phoenix, Achilles’ tutor, resents his father for “dishonoring” (*atimazeske*) his mother by keeping a mistress, and in the *Odyssey* (1.433), Laertes, Odysseus’ father, is said to have refrained from sleeping with a slavewoman out of consideration for his wife’s feelings. Such valuation of the one-to-one relationship between husband and wife was in keeping with the centrality of the two-person conjugal unit in the Greek family, whereas Chinese polygyny fully embodied the interests of the patrilineage.

The practice of polygyny, the subordination of conjugal relationships to parent–children ties, the continuum from wife to mother in the female life cycle, and the discouragement of public display of conjugal intimacy and simultaneous approval of conjugal cooperation may help account for why, comparatively speaking, traditional Chinese society had a low level of overt gender conflict.<sup>57</sup> Besides the dynamics discussed in the previous chapters pertaining to the unique configuration

<sup>55</sup> The Greeks distinguished between the legitimate wife and the two other types of sexual partners, courtesans (*hetairai*) and concubines (*pallakai*) (Just 1989: 50–66).

<sup>56</sup> In court testimony, a speaker defines the different functions of three types of sexual partners, “We have courtesans for pleasure, concubines to take care of our day-to-day bodily needs, and wives to bear us legitimate children and to be the loyal guardians of our households” (Demosthenes 59.122).

<sup>57</sup> Guisso (1981: 60) briefly discusses this point. An important distinction should be made between the concept of rivalry between Men and Women as two permanent sex tribes with distinct attributes and interests (which was characteristic of the Greek tradition), and conflicts over specific matters between men and women, in particular kinship relationships in individual households. The latter type of conflict was of course familiar to the Chinese of all historical periods, but such conflicts tended to be understood as problems that arose in certain families because of the failures of specific individuals and that were to be rectified through education and regulation. What cannot be found in the Chinese tradition is the Greek-style battle of the sexes (see discussions in the following and the Conclusion).

of the relationship among the familial, the religious, and the political in Chinese society, a few more insights may be drawn.

First, a well-defined path of “upward mobility” from wife to mother holds out promise and incentives to all women who entertain hopes for their lives, and the ideal of ceremonious harmony in marriage may have worked just as well to ameliorate gender conflict as to contain the expression of intimacy and affection in conjugal life. Second, because her parents-in-law but in particular her mother-in-law play such an important role in determining the wife’s state of being (from her status to her emotional well-being) in the family, the relationship between the two women could easily become a source of serious tension. Finally, because of the practice of polygyny, rivalry among the consorts, who vie for their husband’s favor, constitutes another mechanism that deflates gender conflict and instead pits the women against each other in the Chinese family. Here it is interesting to note that the principal bride and the other consorts in the same polygynous marriage were usually sisters born to different mothers, paternal cousins, or other female relatives on the male side. Presumably, the rationale for marrying women who were related (though they did not necessarily know one another) was so that they would be more likely to identify with one another’s interests and therefore avoid jeopardizing domestic harmony out of vicious jealousy.<sup>58</sup> This rationale, however, itself reveals that tension among the wives of the family was feared as inevitable and signals the sober reality behind the cherished domestic harmony ideal.

In short, actual and potential rivalry among the women of the household – between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law or among wives (married to the same brother or to different brothers, and related by blood or not) – tended to furnish the most important source of discord in the Chinese family. The authority of the mother-in-law, which was itself potentially a major cause for grievance, was supposed to keep the tension under control. Whereas concerns about sexual rivalry dominate Greek sources, open or implicit conflict among women seems to have had greater potential for creating fault lines in the ideal Chinese family order.

#### *At the Table*

The Chinese seem much more inclined than did the Greeks to try to demonstrate good family order through the conduct of domestic

<sup>58</sup> Jia Junxia (2002: 86), citing the opinion of He Xiu (129–182). Granet (1932: 203–204) subscribes to the same rationale.

festivities. This urge is most clearly seen in relation to the ancestral banquet (see Chapters 2 and 3), but the same concern also often underlies Chinese representations of other familial commensal contexts. The discussion that follows presents different combinations of the family members at table: mother and son, husband and wife, and parents-in-law and daughters-in-law.

The special importance of a dining context for the demonstration of filial piety to mothers in China can be seen in the *Zuo's Commentary* story about when Duke Zhuang of Zheng followed the advice of Ying Kaoshu and healed his rift with his mother despite her repeated attempts to harm him (discussed earlier). Ying had secured an opportunity to remonstrate with the duke when he presented the duke with some gifts and the duke treated him to a feast in return. When the duke saw that Ying had left the meat untouched and asked him why, Ying replied, "I have a mother at home. She has eaten every kind of food that I have obtained for her but she has never tasted the meat stew from your kitchen. Please allow me to bring it back to her" (*Zuo*, Yin 1, Yang 15). These words elicited from the duke an expression of grief and regret because he had vowed never to see his own mother again and thus had nobody to whom to demonstrate his filial piety.

We will not go into how Ying thereupon devised an ingenious plan to restore the duke's relationship with his mother without entailing that the duke literally break his vow. The focus here will be on the significance of the act by which Ying moved the duke and engaged him in a conversation about filial piety. That he could think of his mother and save for her the good food when he dined with the ruler of the state won Ying the duke's envy and the historian's enthusiastic praise (Ying was called "a pure paragon of filial piety" and deemed to be an official who is truly loyal to his lord). The occasion of dining with the duke would have had everything to do with public honor and success and nothing to do with familial virtue, yet in the story the court feast turns out almost to be a foil for the family meal that can be imagined the filial son will lay out for his mother on his return home. It is clear from Ying's other appearances in *Zuo's Commentary* (Yin 11, Yang 73) that he was a remarkable warrior who exulted and excelled in competitive tests of his might, but that only makes his image in the very beginning of the historical work more striking. The effort and ingenuity that Ying showed in helping the duke reconcile with his mother and Ying's subsequent gain in court status and closeness to his lord indicate that "family matters" were of profound importance to aristocrats in eighth-century BCE China. As a son, Ying

presented himself as being so desirous of his mother's pleasure that he would try to save food for her while being entertained by the duke. As a loyal official, Ying evidently believed that restoring harmony and happiness to the duke and his mother counted as a service to his lord no less valuable than fighting valiantly for him on the battlefield.<sup>59</sup>

As shown in Chapter 3, a Chinese man was supposed to set an example for his wife in practicing filial piety. A commensal manifestation of the filial piety expected of the son's wife can be found in the protocol for the feast attended by the bride and her parents-in-law on the day following her wedding (*Yili*, 967–968). After receiving gifts of food and drink that the parents-in-law bestow on her *via assistants*, the bride proceeds to serve her new in-laws at the table *personally*. When the parents-in-law are finished eating, the bride presents them with wine for rinsing their mouths and prepares to eat what each of them has left over. While the mother-in-law allows her to do so, the father-in-law will decline on the grounds that what he has left over is unclean and she will comply with his request that she eat something else as a substitute. Everything in the first family feast involving the bride and her parents-in-law is intended to demonstrate the parents-in-law's authority and precedence, the bride's obedience and subservience, and the special relationship between the bride and her mother-in-law both in its supposed closeness and in the importance of the hierarchy between the two. We wonder whether and in what way the spirit of the bride's very first feast with her parents-in-law would continue to govern all later domestic festivities – excluding the ancestral sacrifices – that she is to attend in their presence. Our evidence, however, does not allow us to answer this question. We know only that the principles and concerns underlying the conduct of the bride's first feast with her parents-in-law are the same as those of the numerous ancestral sacrifices inasmuch as they are all intended to establish and reinforce the hierarchy between wives and their parents-in-law.

The conjugal relationship is seldom singled out for celebration in Chinese representations of domestic feasting. Couples always melt into the larger picture of the harmonious and hierarchical patrilineal

<sup>59</sup> In another story set in 607 BCE in *Zuo's Commentary* (Xuan 2, Yang 661–662), a warrior named Lingzhe, who has not eaten for three days, receives food from Zhao Dun, the Jin minister, but eats only half of it. When asked why he has saved the other half of the food, Lingzhe replies that he wishes to take it home to his mother. Moved by Lingzhe's filial piety, Zhao Dun prepares a separate basket of food for Lingzhe to take home.



family order when ancestral banquets and other family festivities are described. For example, in Ode 164 ("Tang di," Cherry Tree), which was discussed in Chapter 2 apropos of its exhortation of fraternal solidarity, the brothers' wives and children are also shown partaking in the family banquet. Their joy marks the concord among the brothers. An appeal to the welfare of both the nuclear family and the extended family closes the speaker's patient counsel against internal strife:

Set out your dishes and meat-stands,  
Drink wine to your fill;  
All your brothers are here together,  
Peaceful, happy, and mild.

Your wives and children chime as well  
As little zither with big zither.  
Your brothers are in concord,  
Peaceful, merry, in great glee.

Thus you bring good to house and home,  
Joy to wife and child.  
I have deeply studied, I have pondered,  
And truly it is so.

(Cheng and Jiang 451-453;  
Waley 136)

An exception to the general submerging of conjugal relations in the web of the extended family in Chinese representations of domestic festivity may be found in Ode 82 ("Nü yue ji ming," The Lady Says):

The lady says: "The cock has crowed";  
The gentleman says: "Day has not dawned."  
"Rise then, and look at the night;  
The morning star is shining.  
You must be out and abroad,  
Must shoot the wild-duck and wild-geese.

When you have shot them, you must bring them home  
And I will dress them for you,  
And when I have dressed them we will drink wine  
And I will be yours till we are old.  
I will set your zithers before you;  
All shall be peaceful and good."

"Knowing that you work hard,  
I give you jade pendants as gifts.  
Knowing that you are compliant,

I give you jade pendants as presents.  
 Knowing that you love me,  
 I give you jade pendants in return."<sup>60</sup>

This poem provides a rare illustration of conjugal harmony *and* intimacy in early Chinese sources. We see a hardworking couple who know clearly their respective responsibilities in the household. When dawn has barely broken, husband and wife rise and begin their day. The husband will go out to hunt, and the wife will cook the game that he brings back home. When the day is over, they will celebrate it at a small feast. The food and wine are prepared for them both, and music will celebrate their companionship and record their vow to grow old together (與子偕老) (second stanza). The poem ends with the husband's showing affection and respect for his wife and giving her jade pendants as a token of his appreciation (third stanza).

As argued previously, harmony and order was held up as the highest ideal in ancient China that governed all domestic relationships, and the respectful formality that was expected of conjugal relations entailed a clear awareness of each spouse's place in the family. Though Ode 82 does celebrate marital concord that is based on mutual recognition and a division of labor, it stands out for giving voice to the affectionate and intimate elements that often seem suppressed in married life. While conjugal harmony could be achieved without the help of deep affection and intimacy, Ode 82 seems to show a union that does not merely lack conflict but is energized when those elements are present.

Two points of comparison between the Chinese and Greek traditions emerge from the analysis of this section. First, the Chinese interest in making a central theme of the observance of a harmonious and hierarchical family order against a domestic convivial setting was not shared by the Greek authors. Whereas the demonstration of filial piety to a mother would make a feast the most elevating scene for the Chinese, mothers are rarely the focus of attention or the recipients of service and honor in Greek descriptions of domestic festivities. In Menander's play *The Peevish Fellow*, which dramatizes the moment when Greek parents must step aside to leave the stage for the new conjugal pair, the mother is, fittingly, a mute character. As for convivial enactments of the conjugal

<sup>60</sup> Cheng and Jiang 235–238; Waley 69. The translation of the last stanza is my own. My reading and translation of the last stanza follows Cheng and Jiang (237). A different reading, on which Waley's translation is apparently based, will be discussed at the beginning of the next section.

relationship and the relationship between wives and their parents-in-law, the Greek authors either show no interest at all or take delight in showing the two parties in rivalry.

A second contrast between the two traditions lies in the fact that, whereas the Chinese sources portray female banqueters in their domestic roles as mothers, wives, and daughters-in-law, in Greek representations of family feasting women's conventional gender attributes are more noteworthy than are their roles in the family. Thus Sostratos and Kallippides could joke together about the same nameless female character in Menander's play. Although she is the young man's mother and the older man's wife, she is nonetheless first of all a woman to them both and, as such, can be presumed to have all the attributes associated with that gender. The high status of the mother and the intrinsic continuum of a woman's role as mother, wife, and daughter-in-law prevented the development in the Chinese tradition of the idea of women as a race in opposition to men. The lack of the same domestic mechanism in the Greek traditions, by contrast, corresponds to an awareness of the female gender as a discrete concept that exists independently of a woman's specific role in relation to a specific man.

#### *Behind the Scenes*

My reading of Ode 82's last stanza (see earlier) treats the lines as part of the conjugal exchange dramatized in the song, that is, as the husband's appreciative speech to his compliant and industrious wife. This reading, which puts the convivial celebration of marital harmony at its center, diverges from the influential classical interpretation that understands the wife as the speaker in both the middle and the last stanzas. In that reading, the good wife not only serves her husband well by providing him with food, drink, and music (stanza 2) but she is also eager to offer hospitality to his friends (stanza 3). This classical tradition seems to be the basis for Waley's translation of the last stanza:

Did I but know those who come to you,  
I have girdle-stones of many sorts to give them;  
Did I but know those that have followed you,  
I have girdle-stones of many sorts as presents for them.  
Did I know those that love you,  
I have girdle-stones of many sorts to requite them.

(Cheng and Jiang 238; Waley 69).

According to Zhu Xi's interpretation of this speech ascribed to the wife, she does not limit herself to providing domestic comfort for her

critical. Had Bozong not sent away their son, the family line would have been extinguished.

Another important family decision seems to have been made in similar circumstances in a second story. In 637 BCE, Prince Chong'er, who had fled Jin as the victim of a palace intrigue, arrived in the state of Cao. Hearing that Chong'er had strange-looking ribs, Duke Gong (?–618 BCE) contrived to see them with his own eyes by peeping from behind a curtain while his guest was taking a bath. Such rude behavior constituted a serious violation of decorum. It is interesting that the historian registered his criticism through the mouth of a woman, the wife of the Cao minister Xi Fuji. Madame Xi reportedly said to her husband the following:

According to my observation (吾觀), all those who attend upon the Prince of Jin are capable of serving as chief ministers. Should they assist him, he is sure to be able to return to his country. After he returns, he will certainly succeed in rising above the other states. When he becomes a leader and proceeds to punish those who have been discourteous to him, Cao will be his first target. Why don't you differentiate yourself [from Duke Gong] as soon as possible?

(Zuo, Xi 23, Yang 407; *Guoyu*, Jin 4, 346)

Xi Fuji followed his wife's advice and befriended Chong'er. This action paid off five years later, when Chong'er, now the ruler of Jin, led an invasion of Cao and captured Duke Gong. Remembering the favors Xi Fuji had done for him during his difficult times, Chong'er ordered that Xi's family and house be protected (Zuo, Xi 28, Yang 454). As in the previous story, a wife made a vital contribution by her good advice. However, the records do not indicate on what basis Madame Xi formed her high estimate of the exiles. I am tempted to take the expression she used, "according to my observation 吾觀," in a literal sense. That is, it is very possible that Madame Xi, like Bozong's wife in the previous story, also had had a chance to eavesdrop on a party in her home.<sup>63</sup>

The anecdotes about Bozong's wife and Xi Fuji's wife represent the same pattern of conjugal interaction. The husband might be the one

<sup>63</sup> A much later story in the fifth-century *New Account of the World of Tales* (*Shishuo xinyu*) (Yu Jiaxi 1993: 679) corroborates my reading. Madame Han was the wife of the scholar-official Shan Tao (205–283), who had among his friends the famous eccentrics Ruan Ji (210–263) and Xi Kang (223–263). Citing the precedent of Xi Fuji's wife, Madame Han asked her husband to invite these two men, who were visiting their home, to stay for a feast, and she proceeded to observe the diners through a hole in the wall. Afterward, she discussed her observations with her husband, making comments and drawing comparisons about the personalities of the three friends.

offering to let the wife eavesdrop on his guests, or she might make the request, but consent and cooperation characterize the interplay. Furthermore, the man is shown appreciating the woman's intelligence and benefiting from her loyalty and interest in his affairs.

In still another story, we meet a mother behind the scenes of male feasting and become aware of her full authority. This mother was none other than Jing Jiang, the widow known for her moral guidance of her son Wenbo. The setting was her son's house, where Wenbo was entertaining Nangong Jingshu, a cousin from another prominent aristocratic Lu family. Lu Dufu, a minister, was present as the honored guest. When tortoiseshells were served, Lu Dufu received a small one and became upset. As the guests invited each other to dine on the tortoiseshells, Lu Dufu declined and left the banquet after saying that he would eat after the tortoiseshell had grown up. Jing Jiang, who learned about the incident – how we do not know, but it must have been either through her own observation or through a report by the family's servants – reacted with rage and summoned Wenbo. She chided him, "I heard from my deceased father-in-law that at sacrifices the Impersonator for the ancestor should receive special provision and at banquets the honored guests should receive special provision. For what reason do you have to offend a guest by being stingy with tortoiseshells?" After this scolding, she drove Wenbo out of the house. It was five days before she allowed her son to return, following the intervention of a minister (*Guoyu*, Lu 2, 202–203).

The harsh punishment that Jing Jiang imposed on Wenbo demonstrated her authority over her son. The two wives in the earlier stories, Madame Sun and Madame Xi, for all the sagacity and confidence that they displayed in their judgments and suggestions, obviously acted with the understanding that they were helping their husbands and were counting on the men's compliance and support. In a very different position, Jing Jiang, the mother, reprimanded and expelled her son for his convivial misconduct. This is not an example of a mother's senseless wrath about or abuse of an obedient son. As always, Jing Jiang is portrayed in the numerous early sources as a paragon of virtue.

Because lapses at a banquet brought disgrace to a house, and an offended guest could become a potential enemy, Jing Jiang took drastic action to redress any damage caused by Wenbo's convivial oversight. The harshness of the punishment made it visible to the public, and the minister's intercession indicated the public's acknowledgment and appreciation of the family's sincerity. That Jing Jiang was acting in behalf of family interests and ultimately speaking on patriarchal authority can

be seen from her evocation of the words of her deceased father-in-law, which aimed at reminding Wenbo of the responsibility he bore to the family line. In other words, in exercising her motherly authority Jing Jiang shared the same foundation as the wives who were praised for advancing their family's interest through their behind-the-scenes activities at their husbands' parties. Jing Jiang had been a wife before, and like her those wives would eventually become matriarchs and guardians of the family order. Then they too could give commands and impose punishment besides offering advice based on what they had observed at men's parties.

It would be interesting to compare the tortoise incident involving Jing Jiang's intervention in a banquet hosted by her son with Penelope's third and last appearance before the reveling suitors in the *Odyssey* (her two previous such appearances have already been analyzed). In Book 18, after the duel between the disguised Odysseus and Iros, the public beggar, which the suitors have watched with great amusement, Penelope decides to warn Telemakhos about the danger of associating with the suitors. Again veiled and accompanied by two maids, she delivers a speech as she stands by the doorpost of the dining hall:

Telemakhos, your mind and thoughts are no longer steadfast.  
 When you were a child still, you had better thoughts in mind. Now  
 when you are big, and come to the measure of maturity, and one  
 who saw you, some outsider, viewing your size and beauty,  
 would say you were the son born of a prosperous man;  
 your thoughts are no longer righteous, nor your perception;  
 such a thing has been done now, here in our palace, and you  
 permitted our stranger guest to be so outrageously handled.  
 How must it be now, if the stranger who sits in our household  
 is to be made to suffer so from bitter brutality?  
 That must be your outrage and shame as people see it.

(*Od.*18. 215–225; Lattimore 275–276)

The circumstances strongly resemble the tortoise incident. In both instances a mother learns about what happens in the dining hall, is troubled by her son's conduct, and proceeds to admonish him. Differences between the actions of the two mothers are also obvious, however. First, Penelope makes her way to the dining hall in an attempt to achieve her aim, whereas Jing Jiang makes her son come to her. Second, Jing Jiang invokes the name of an ancestor in scolding her son, whereas Penelope blames Telemakhos out of concern for potential harm to his own reputation.

The Chinese mother who exercises authority over her son is allowed and encouraged to do so because she is held as a loyal representative of the family interests and a key player in the maintenance of the patrilineal and patriarchal family order. There is a reserved niche in the domestic sphere for her use of power. When Jing Jiang sees Wenbo improperly conducting the banquet, she does not go to him, but summons him to her, and there is no room for doubt about her authority over him. Penelope is in a quite different position.

Like other noblewomen in the Homeric world, Penelope, in the capacity of the mistress of the household, oversees the extension of hospitality to the guests that come to the house.<sup>64</sup> However, Telemakhos does not hesitate to criticize his mother's managerial sense and ability. Checking with the nurse to see whether the stranger (Odysseus in disguise) has been adequately cared for, he uses these words, "Dear nurse, how have you treated the stranger-guest in our house? / With food and a bed? Or has he been left to lie uncared-for? / That is the way my mother is, though she is sensible. / Impulsively she favors the wrong man, the worse one / among mortals, and lets the better man go, unfavored" (*Od.* 20.129–133; Lattimore 301). Moreover, while Jing Jiang stands for the interests of lineage and family in wielding her authority over her son, Penelope must appeal to his own welfare when advising Telemakhos. In contrast to the well-defined systemic power that a Chinese mother commands, a Penelope seems much less sure of her personal influence over a son who believes that he has come into his own and is ready to assert his authority in the house and to strike out into the world beyond.

Of course, not all Chinese women "got it right" in taking action while their kinsmen hosted social events. An analysis of two perceived "failures" will help us better understand the positive portrayals of the women behind the scenes. Both examples come from *Zuo's Commentary* and involve the mother of a duke.

In the first record, the mother of Duke Qing of Qi (r. 598–582 BCE) watched from behind curtains as her son had an audience with a visiting diplomat from Jin, a crippled minister named Xi Ke. When the duchess saw Xi Ke limping up the steps of the audience hall, she was so amused that she broke out into laughter. Taking great offense at this public insult, Xi Ke vowed revenge. He made good on his vow three years later. In 589 BCE, after Qi was defeated in a war with Jin, Xi Ke demanded that the duchess be held hostage in Jin. It was only thanks to

<sup>64</sup> Pedrick (1988).

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<sup>64</sup> Pedrick (1988).



Duke Qing's appeal in the name of filial piety that she escaped personal reprisal.<sup>65</sup>

The second record concerns Mu Jiang (d. 564 BCE), the stepmother of Duke Cheng of Lu (r. 590–573 BCE) and one of the most colorful women in *Zuo's Commentary*. The incident took place at the banquet that Duke Cheng held for Ji Wenzi (d. 568 BCE), his chief councilor. Ji Wenzi had just returned from a diplomatic visit on behalf of the ducal house to the duke's sister (Mu Jiang's daughter), who had recently married Duke Gong of Song (such visits were required by contemporary marriage rites). While the feast was underway, Mu Jiang emerged from the side chamber, greeted Ji Wenzi and thanked him for the service by reciting a poem from the *Odes*. She left only after this rather elaborate performance (*Zuo*, Cheng 9, Yang 843).

The most obvious difference between these two narratives involves the results of the behaviors of the two duchesses. In one instance, the laughter of the unseen duchess caused a war of vengeance because she had publicly insulted a high minister of a powerful state. In the other, the unexpected appearance of the elegant duchess at the banquet apparently had no negative consequences. However, the two incidents were similar in the nature of the duchesses' behaviors and in the social perception of such behaviors. In laughing behind the scenes on a diplomatic occasion or showing up when the duke entertained his chief councilor, each duchess violated the code of female conduct that required respectable women to be invisible and inaudible during all-male social events. There is no question that the indiscrete duchess of Qi, who caused a war, was viewed with great disfavor by the historian. In addition, the systematic depiction of Mu Jiang as an audacious and adulterous woman whose ambitions could not be contained within the women's quarters also made it clear that her presence and ingenious performance at her son's banquet fit into a highly problematic pattern.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>65</sup> *Zuo*, Xuan 17, Yang 771–772; *Zuo*, Cheng 2, Yang 797. Citing two lines from the *Odes*, “Pious sons in good store. / A good thing is given you for ever” (Ode 247, “Ji zui,” Drunk with Wine,” discussed in Chapter 2), Duke Qing of Qi argued that it would be immoral for Jin, a leader among the states, to force another state to violate filial piety by demanding that he turn over his mother.

<sup>66</sup> I have suggested elsewhere that, in choosing the stanzas that she recited for Ji Wenzi, Mu Jiang was probably flirting with the most powerful minister in her son's court (Y. Zhou 2003). Noted for his prudence, Ji Wenzi did not respond as Mu Jiang might have wished and hostility seems to have subsequently developed between the two. Mu Jiang did find a lover in Shusun Qiaoru (b. 616 BCE), a courtier with comparable nobility of birth and political clout. Ode 27, recited by Mu Jiang, will be discussed in Chapter 5 in relation to women's voices in early Chinese poetry.

The behaviors of the two duchesses set them apart from Jing Jiang and other Chinese women who worked to bolster the interests of the male-centered family while keeping to their prescribed place behind the scenes. By contrast, the two duchesses not only transgressed the physical gender boundaries in revealing their presence to the male guests but also showed no regard for the interests of their sons in indulging in their own pleasures or pursuing their own motives. Of the two grounds on which the Chinese duchesses incurred unfavorable judgments, one (that the male banquet should be beyond a woman's reach) can also explain the clash between Penelope and Telemakhos, whereas the presumed inapplicability of the other (that the transgressive woman disregarded and hurt her kinsmen's interests) may have saved the virtuous Greek queen from being further condemned.

Telemakhos' reaction to Penelope's public appearances and the Chinese dukes' reactions to their mothers' activities can also be compared. Penelope meets with outright criticism from her son, and she sees it as wise to yield. By contrast, there is no record that the two Chinese duchesses received any criticism from their sons. In fact, Duke Qing fought valiantly in the war caused by his mother and after Qi lost the war the duke eloquently and successfully contested Jin's demand that he surrender his mother as a hostage (*Zuo*, Cheng 16, Yang 890–892). Duke Cheng of Lu, who apparently had tolerated his mother's bold acts in the past, continued to yield to her attempts at domination after her banquet appearance (although she went too far when she collaborated with her lover to depose the duke).<sup>67</sup> A Chinese son would consider himself blessed if he had an upright, devoted, and ritually rigorous mother like Jing Jiang to always watch out for him and act in his interest from behind the scenes, but he was also supposed to accept his role if he had a mother who grossly diverged from the ideal. Just as the Chinese mother was endowed with greater systemic power and latitude than her Greek counterpart, the Chinese son learned early and was exhorted to remember all his life that obedience to his mother was his duty, a virtue apparently unknown to Telemakhos or to any other aspiring young Greek man who had his heart set on excellence and success.

<sup>67</sup> When that happened, Duke Cheng had Mu Jiang moved to another palace (*Zuo*, Xiang 9, Yang 964).

## Conclusion

Chinese representations of family banquets emphasize the harmony and order among the participants, between old and young, between male and female, and among the women. Filial piety is warmly celebrated, the mother is noted for the honor and authority she enjoys vis-à-vis her sons and her daughters-in-law, and conjugal concord is the theme in the rare case when husband and wife appear as the major protagonists. The Greek sources present a different picture. The family banquet is not typically depicted as an essential symbol of a good domestic life. Husbands and wives, who appear as the chief convivialists, engage in rivalry and conflict as they feast, and the banquet does not play a special role in reinforcing ties between parents and their adult children. Furthermore, the banquet furnishes an important context for associating women with such stereotypical gender attributes as gluttony and bibulousness.

The representations of the men's parties at home show two different patterns of gender interaction. In the Chinese texts, wives and mothers are praised or blamed in accordance with whether their actions are in line with the interests of the patrilineal family. The authority and latitude enjoyed by the mother behind the scenes (whether she is virtuous or not) are as noteworthy as the appreciation afforded the wives, who make good use of their managerial roles. The Greek representations, on the other hand, are striking for the complaints about cantankerous wives who refuse to cooperate with their husbands when they host guests. In contrast to the feisty wives who make trouble for their husbands, the mother who is rebuffed by her son in a banquet hall appears rather powerless.

In assessing these comparisons, we are faced with issues of value and fact. The Chinese represented their family banquets in the way that they did because they were more concerned about the discord caused by any violation of familial hierarchy and boundary – be it between the generations, between the sexes, or among the women of the family – and because they regarded domestic festivities as crucial occasions for promoting the ideal family order. By the same token, the Greek representations came off the way they did because Greeks were less preoccupied with the regulation of domestic relations (in convivial or other settings) and also because in the Greek understanding harmony was not necessarily incompatible with conflict and rivalry.

However, values are not just about fabricated representation and imagination. The Chinese obsession with the assertion of family order

in convivial contexts makes sense in view of the pivotal status of the patrilineal family in their sociopolitical order. There are also good reasons why the Greek authors manifested a profound concern with sexual rivalry but, unlike their Chinese counterparts, hardly considered the relationships among the women of the family in their vision of good family order. Also, given Homer's status as the revered educator in Greece, we have to take seriously his portrayal of Penelope as her husband's rival in intelligence but as an inert and powerless mother and to think about how such portrayal was grounded in the norms and ideals, as well as the reality, of Greek family life. Finally, even if the popularity of images of bibulous and gluttonous women in Greece and the absence of such images in China does not reliably reveal anything about women's actual behavior in either society, the contrast does point to the different ways women were perceived in the two societies. In Greece, "Woman" constituted one of the two human races characterized by a set of common traits, and women received separate public collective representation on civic occasions vis-à-vis men (see Introduction and Chapter 3). In China, women were always viewed as individual members with specific and changing roles in family and kinship networks, and they did not receive collective representation beyond the domestic setting.

PART THREE

FEMALE EXPERIENCE AND MALE  
IMAGINATION



## What Women Sang Of

Women sang in ancient China and Greece, both when they were weighed down with work and solitude and when they were enjoying leisure and company. What they sang of in both situations is the subject of this chapter. As I will show, Greek women tended to make friendship and, to a lesser extent, the mother–daughter bond the themes of their songs, whereas husbands, in-laws, and sometimes parents were the pre-occupations in the poetry believed to have been composed by Chinese women.

A discussion of women's voices will add a crucial dimension to our understanding of the conceptions of gender relations in the two societies by providing an insight into the feelings of those who so far in the study have appeared mainly as objects in the ideologies and institutions created and dominated by men. Before I attempt to retrieve the female perspective, however, I must first address the issue of the nature of the available primary sources, and most importantly, how “genuine” the “women's voices” that have come down to us are.

The question of “genuineness” is a relatively straightforward one to answer for the works by Greek women poets. From the poems of the great, “burning” Sappho in the late seventh/early sixth centuries BCE to those of Erinna, Anyte, and Nossis in the fourth and third centuries BCE, we have a corpus of poetry by women whose historicity and literary reputations are amply attested in ancient (mostly classical and Hellenistic) sources. As best exemplified by Sappho's fame in antiquity, the Greeks accepted the fact that some women possessed an extraordinary gift for poetry and could produce works worthy of transmission and praise.

By contrast, we have little solid basis for confirming the female authorship of the poems in the *Odes* that are traditionally believed to have been

composed by Chinese women. The anthology is a collection of largely anonymous poems whose themes and voices are open to interpretations. This is especially true for the odes in the *Airs of the States* section, in which love and desire are among the major subjects and account for most of the songs traditionally attributed to women.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, it is futile to argue about the gender (or any other attribute) of the author of almost any poem in the *Odes*, and thus the effort to discern women's subjective experience in early Chinese poetry is fundamentally fraught with problems.

I hope that the comparative angle will be of some help in the challenging attempt to decipher the experiences and feelings of Zhou women from the female voices in the *Odes*. As I will show, the values and sentiments expressed by female authors or speakers in Chinese and Greek poetry point us back to the patterns about gender and sociability in Greece and China that we have already found on the basis of male sources. This correspondence means that within the two traditions there are different degrees of schism between the values expressed by female authors and speakers on the one hand and male perceptions and expectations of women on the other. Domesticity in the male-centered family, which was the common sphere assigned to women in both China and Greece, was as much a central theme for the female speakers in Chinese poetry as it was a foil for the celebration of female friendship and mother-daughter bond in the songs of Greek literary women. How shall we understand this difference?

Should we suspect male ventriloquism to be at work in the female voices in the *Odes* but "authenticate" the expression of female subjectivity in Greek women's poetry inasmuch as the Greek women's songs show resistance to male-dominant social norms? In that case, however, we should also consider the fact that Greek women poets passionately celebrated friendship, just as Greek men authors did and also thought that Greek women would do. If Greek women in their genuine voices partook of the same values as Greek men, should we take seriously also the centrality of kinship enunciated by female speakers in early Chinese poetry? Though the predominant anonymity of early Chinese poetry will hinder the cautious student from speaking of its "genuine" expressions of women's experience, it would be fruitful to juxtapose

<sup>1</sup> Textual ambiguity (in terms of both the theme and the author's gender) is less of an issue in the songs about formal ritual occasions and male aristocratic activities that are concentrated in the three other sections of the *Odes*.



the Chinese and Greek poetic traditions in a case study of the intriguing relationship between female subjectivity, male mainstream values, and men's imaginings about women. If it is extremely difficult to know how women in male-dominant ancient societies actually defined and interpreted reality,<sup>2</sup> are the male representations of women and gender relations largely the "other" created for the consumption of a male audience (providing both entertainment and instruction) and do they tell us more about the men than about the women?<sup>3</sup> How illuminating would it be if we could show that different relations of resistance and accommodation existed between male and female discourses in different cultures, represented by ancient China and Greece in the present context? These issues will be the subject of discussion in the last two sections of this chapter.

### Greece: Daughters and Companions

None of the women poets of ancient Greece leaves any trace of their husbands in their extant poetry. In contrast to the utter obscurity of the husband, the mother-daughter tie and especially extrafamilial female bonds figure prominently in the works of the Greek women poets. As will be seen, these sentiments tend to be expressed in relation to a number of themes and contexts: mourning; separation and memories; weaving (the most typical feminine work) and fabrics; and women's group activities, often in honor of female deities.

#### *Daughters*

I have a beautiful child who looks like golden flowers,  
My darling Kleis, for whom I would not  
Take all Lydia or lovely . . .

Thus reads Sappho 132. It is unknowable whether the historical Sappho had a daughter named Kleis, as claimed in the biographical tradition that seems to have been derived from those of Sappho's fragments that mention Kleis. What is clear and important is that the great woman poet sings of a mother's fond feelings and pride in her little daughter.

<sup>2</sup> Acknowledging this point, Winkler (1990a, ch. 7) argues that "behind the façade of public docility [Greek] women had lives of their own and arguably, a more comprehensive understanding of men than men had of women."

<sup>3</sup> See Winkler (1990a) and Zeitlin (1996) for arguments about the "mirroring" function served by women in male representations.

She compares the girl to golden flowers and treasures her more than the wealthy kingdom of Lydia (or any other attractive thing that may have been mentioned in the missing portion of the poem). Mother and daughter are shown engaging in a conversation in two other fragments, Sappho 98a and 98b, which appear on the same papyrus. Fragment 98a, the much better preserved of the two, reads:

...For my mother (once said that)  
 In her youth,  
 If someone had her locks  
 Bound in a purple (headband),  
 That was indeed a great adornment,  
 But for the girl who has hair  
 That is yellower than a torch,  
 (It is better to decorate it) with wreaths  
 Of flowers in bloom.  
 Recently...a decorated headband  
 From Sardis...  
 (Ionian?) cities...

Fragment 98b contains only one complete sentence, "But for you, Kleis, I have no way of obtaining a decorated headband." From what is decipherable in the rest of the fragment, the apologetic mother seems to be explaining to Kleis that she is unable to get her the coveted headband because they are now in exile from their home country.<sup>4</sup> Though their precise relationship is uncertain, it makes sense to read fragment 98a and fragment 98b as both being addressed to Kleis and as centered on conversations that arose from the girl's request for a decorated headband. These two fragments allow us a glimpse of the kind of mother-to-daughter transmission of teachings that must have happened on a daily basis. It is noticeable that, in an effort to persuade her little daughter, the speaker in Sappho 98a invokes a chain of mother-daughter bonds by remembering what her own mother used to teach her in the matter of hair decoration. Such casual, intimate interactions between mothers and daughters may have provided much of the daily diversion and informal education down the generations for Greek women.

<sup>4</sup> Campbell's translation reads, "but...the Mytilenean...to have...if...decorated... (the city has?) these memorials of the exile of the sons of Kleanax; for these (of ours?) ... wasted away dreadfully..." Cf. the report in the Parian Marble that Sappho went into exile during a period of political unrest in Lesbos.

Sappho 102 shows a girl revealing a weighty secret to her mother, perhaps while they are both working at the loom:

Truly, sweet mother (*glukēa mater*), I cannot weave my web,  
For I'm overcome with desire for a boy because of slender Aphrodite.

If it is natural that the girl, burdened with secret longing for a boy, chooses to confide in her mother when they are weaving together,<sup>5</sup> that she uses the word “sweet” (*glukēa*) of her maternal confidante is striking. Juxtaposed against the poignant desire that is overwhelming the love-lorn daughter, “sweet mother” seems to stand for comfort and security that the girl needs and cannot find elsewhere.

The importance of weaving for establishing a close mother–daughter bond can also be seen in an epigram by Nossis (fl. 300 BCE), a woman poet from Lokri (a Greek colony in southern Italy). The poem was composed upon the dedication of a robe to Hera at the goddess’ famous temple on the Lakinian promontory (to the north of Lokri):

Hera revered, you who often descend from heaven  
and look on your Lakinian shrine fragrant with frankincense,  
accept the linen cloak which Theophilis, daughter of Kleokha,  
wove for you with her noble daughter Nossis.<sup>6</sup>

The poet’s invoking of three generations of women (Kleokha, Theophilis, and Nossis) in this dedication is reminiscent of the lines in Sappho 98a, in which the mother imparts to her daughter what she heard from her own mother about hair decoration.<sup>7</sup> The fact that in Nossis’ poem mother and daughter jointly wove the robe (and perhaps carried it to Hera’s temple on a pilgrimage) intensifies the emotional significance of the time they shared at the loom. In response to the confinement and arduousness of their quotidian domestic existence, Greek mothers and daughters sought comfort in each other, and the sound of

<sup>5</sup> Bowra (1961: 134) understands Sappho 102 as “a *chanson de toile*, such as girls sang over the loom, lamenting their loves.”

<sup>6</sup> AP 6.265. For a discussion of this poem, see Skinner (1987) and Snyder (1989: 79).

<sup>7</sup> Some scholars (e.g., Redfield 2003: 265n47 and Snyder 1989: 79) believe that Nossis’ identification of her ancestry by matronymics (i.e., the name of her mother and of her mother’s mother) is an indication of the matrilineal system that may have been practiced in Lokri. However, as argued by Skinner (1987) and noted by Snyder (1989: 169n24), Greek women may have regularly addressed each other using the matronymic and Nossis’ poem therefore illustrates a “gender-specific speech trait” rather than a custom peculiar to Lokri.

their voices chatting and singing rose above the sounds of the “melodic loom.”<sup>8</sup> The robe that Nossis and her mother dedicated to Hera consecrated a vital emotional bond that sustained Greek women’s lives and provided an important theme for their songs.<sup>9</sup>

The mother–daughter bond seems to continue to be privileged in notions of the afterlife, as seen both in actual grave inscriptions and in literary epigrams dedicated to girls who die before they can marry.<sup>10</sup> Two epigrams by Anyte (fl. 300 BCE) of Tegea, whose extant works represent the largest corpus by a Greek woman poet excluding Sappho, show a mother mourning the early death of her daughter:

Often on this her daughter’s tomb did Kleina  
call on her dear short-lived child in wailing tones,  
summoning back the soul of Philainis, who before her wedding  
passed across the pale stream of Acheron.

(AP 7.486)

Instead of a bridal chamber and solemn wedding rites for you,  
your mother put upon this marble tomb  
a maiden that has your stature and beauty,  
Thersis; you can be addressed though you are now dead.

(AP 7.649)

It has been suggested that the focus on the physical tomb in these two epigrams may point to their intended use as actual epitaphs rather than as literary pieces.<sup>11</sup> True or not, the central role of the mother in the two epigrams is in accord with her prominence in real epitaphs for girls who died premature deaths. As Eva Stehle has found in her study of epitaphs from the sixth through the fourth centuries BCE, in comparison with the father the mother is more often listed as the mourner for the daughter and when multiple family members are mentioned the

<sup>8</sup> The melodic loom is a familiar trope in Greek literature. See, for example, Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris* 222, AP 6.47, 6.160, 6.174, 6.288. It is probable that women’s habit of singing while they wove gave rise to this trope. The close association between weaving and singing in Greek culture was such that in the *Odyssey* even the goddesses Kalypso and Kirke are described as singing while they work at the loom (*Od.* 5.61–62, 10.221–222, 254–255).

<sup>9</sup> Skinner (1991: 23) argues that in this poem Nossis pays “tribute to her mother as her earliest creative mentor.”

<sup>10</sup> The epigram, originally an inscription on a tombstone, came to be practiced as a literary genre.

<sup>11</sup> Snyder (1989: 68–69) makes this suggestion, assuming that literary epigrams tend to focus not on the tomb but on sentiments between the living and the dead.

mother also tends to hold first place.<sup>12</sup> Of Anyte's two epigrams, one names Thersis' mother as the person who set up her daughter's statue on the girl's tomb, and the other portrays Kleina as in perpetual deep mourning during visits to her daughter Philainis' tomb. In both pieces the mother's sorrow over the daughter's untimely death is the focus of the pathos, but the epigram about Thersis and her mother presents the mother-daughter bond in a more reciprocal and touching manner. While Philainis appears as the silent object of her mother's recurrent lamentation, Thersis lives on in the image of the statue that her mother erects for her. The statue keeps alive the emotive interaction between mother and daughter because it enables the illusion that Thersis "can be addressed though [she is] now dead." More than Kleina's frequent wailings at Philainis' tomb, the mother's visualization of a Thersis whom she can continue to greet and speak to not only bears out the deep feelings between the mother and daughter but also reveals a keen desire to retain what must have been crucial in cultivating such feelings: the presence of someone in the home to whom a woman could speak, express her intimate sentiments, and pass on her knowledge and wisdom.<sup>13</sup>

### *Companions: Sappho*

It is generally agreed that Sappho, revered as the Tenth Muse, composed most of her poems for a female audience. Who these women were forms the starting point for all criticism that takes a thematic approach to or seeks to elucidate the contexts for Sappho's compositions. Was Sappho the head of a "finishing school" that offered instructions to girls of marriageable age; a poet, like Alkman, for young women's choruses; a leader of a women's religious organization; or a female counterpart to male sympotic poets like her compatriot Alkaios?<sup>14</sup> As I see it, each of the major interpretations captures a particular aspect of Sappho's poetry, and we will never be able to answer definitively "who Sappho

<sup>12</sup> Stehle (2001: 181–183).

<sup>13</sup> Women's aptitude for expressing strong emotions was recognized in the Greek custom that entrusted them with a major role in lamenting the dead at funerals (Alexiou 1974; Seaford 1994: 74–92). Epitaphs and epigrams (whether deictic or not) tended to depict women in unrestrained mourning. Of course, Greek women mourned relatives besides their daughters, but the point here is that the mother-daughter bond was particularly prominent in both actual epitaphs and literary epigrams. On the cultural expectation that a mother should be the transmitter of knowledge and virtue to her daughter, see Stehle (2001, esp. p. 192).

<sup>14</sup> A sample of the major contemporary views on Sappho's circle can be found in the articles collected in Greene (1996). See also Stehle (1997, ch. 6) and Williamson (1995).

was” by choosing just one of the suggested labels. In my reading of her work, friendship and rivalry that centered on the activities in the young women’s choruses that trained for various festivals provided the background and themes for Sappho’s poetry. Those activities may have had religious, pedagogical, convivial, and erotic dimensions to them all at once, but it is important and beyond doubt that Sappho’s best poetry was composed about and for a group (or groups) of women who regarded one another as companions and cultivated mutual bonds through ritual, festivities, and song. As the speaker pronounces in Sappho 160: “I shall now sing these songs beautifully to delight my companions (*tade nun etairais tais emais terpnai kalōs aeiō*).” In the following, we will read the Sapphic corpus in terms of how friendship and rivalry form its central concern.<sup>15</sup> The discussion focuses on three aspects: pleasure of companionship, denunciation of betrayal, and struggles with the pain brought by marriage.

A celebration of the delights of companionship can be found in Sappho 2, which describes a convivial event held under the auspices of Aphrodite, the deity who is most frequently invoked in Sappho’s songs:

Hither to me from Crete to this holy  
temple, where is your delightful grove  
of apple trees, and altars smoking  
with incense.

Therein cold water babbles through  
apple branches, and the whole place is shadowed  
by roses, and from the shimmering leaves  
sleep comes down.

Therein too a meadow, where horses graze,  
blossoms with spring flowers, and the winds  
blow gently...

...

There, Kyprian, take...  
and pour gracefully into golden cups  
nectar that is mingled with  
our festivities...

<sup>15</sup> The tenth-century *Suda* (test. 2) classifies Sappho’s associates as either pupils or friends and close companions (*hetairai kai philai*). Because the extant poetry does not allow us to distinguish with certainty between pupils and friends and, moreover, because a student may well become a teacher’s lifelong friend, I advocate using “companions” and “friends” as general references. The intriguing issue of homoeroticism in the Sapphic circle will be addressed later.

Rather than a formal prayer-hymn to Aphrodite performed on a ritual occasion in honor of the goddess, this poem more likely functioned as a drinking song and was performed at the women's gathering after the participants had finished sacrificing and as they set about their feasting. The soothing atmosphere conjured up by the imagery of the burning incense, the cold water babbling through the apple branches, and the sleep that descends from the shimmering leaves suggests that the solemn part of the event is over and that the devout can now appropriate the occasion for themselves. Nevertheless, the goddess has not yet left her attendants. Her radiant sensuality is reflected in the meadow blossoming with spring flowers, and the imagery of the grazing horses suggests an erotic ambiance proper to the goddess of love.<sup>16</sup> In the last stanza, the poet invites the goddess to join in the festivities of the human banqueters. The intimacy with which the poet renders her request of the goddess is a clue to the cordial and lighthearted atmosphere that dominates the gathering.

Several Sapphic fragments bear out the belief that friendship can be defined by the presence of common enemies. In those poems the speaker uses strongly derisive language against her enemies, and she expresses her frustration over a former companion's desertion of her circle and turning to her rivals. Fragment 57, for example, reads:

What country girl beguiles your mind...  
dressed in country garb...  
not knowing how to pull her rags over her ankles?

In fragment 71, which records another betrayal, Sappho evokes memories of the good times the women had together:

...Mika...you...  
But I shall not allow you...  
You chose the friendship of ladies of the house of Penthilos...  
You villain,...our...  
A sweet song...  
soft-voiced... (sings?),  
and shrill (breezes?) ...dewy...

This song may well have been performed at a gathering of women after one of them, Mika, had abandoned her old friends and joined another

<sup>16</sup> For the sexually charged image of animals grazing in flowery meadows, see Segal (1965).

influential women's circle in the city.<sup>17</sup> After expressing anger and disappointment, Sappho dwells on reminiscences of what I believe are past festivities that they shared. The effect is not only a more powerful denunciation of the unfaithful member but also an earnest appeal to the others to remain together. A betrayal is thus turned into a means for advocating loyalty and reinforcing friendship.<sup>18</sup>

Sporadic betrayals can be met with a strong sense of righteousness and may even bind friends closer to one another, but marriage poses more formidable strains for a circle of friends because it is inevitable. Several of Sappho's major fragments show women dealing with this challenge. Fragment 94 is one of them:

... Honestly I wish I were dead.  
with many tears she was leaving me,  
  
And she said this:  
"Oh what bad luck has been ours,  
Sappho; I truly leave you against my will."  
  
I replied to her thus:  
"Go and farewell and remember me,  
for you know how we cared for you.  
  
But if you do not, then I want  
to remind you...  
...and the good times we had.  
  
You put on many wreaths of violets  
and roses and crocuses  
close by my side,  
  
and many garlands  
woven from flowers  
around your tender neck,  
  
and...with much flowery perfume,  
you anointed yourself,  
fit for a queen...  
  
and on a soft bed...  
...tender...  
you satisfied your longing (*pothon*)...

<sup>17</sup> Pittakos, the tyrant who ruled Mytilene in Sappho's time and who was a major enemy of Alkaios (see Chapter 1), married into the house of Penthilos.

<sup>18</sup> Sappho 49 and 131 also seem to be about betrayal by a companion. Fragment 49: "I loved you, Atthis, once long ago...You seemed to me a small, graceless child." Fragment 131: "(But?), Atthis, the thought of me has grown hateful to you, / and you fly off to Andromeda."



There was neither . . .  
nor shrine . . .  
from which we were absent,  
no grove . . . nor dance . . . sound . . .”

It is generally agreed that the interlocutor of “Sappho” (so addressed in the second stanza, be she the poet herself or her persona) in fragment 94 is a young woman who is leaving for marriage.<sup>19</sup> It is probable that the context is a farewell party held for the bride-to-be, as indicated by the use of first-person plural (“how we cared for you” and “from which we were absent”) and the references to wreaths and garlands in the middle of the fragment.<sup>20</sup> The shrine, grove, and dance mentioned in the highly fragmented last stanzas suggest choral activities, and it has been argued that the addressee of the poem is a girl who is leaving the choral group to marry.<sup>21</sup> At this final gathering with the bride-to-be, many tears are shed and anxieties about the future expressed, but Sappho, apparently the central figure of the group, tries to offer the girl the strength to face her new life by reminding her of the good times they had had together.<sup>22</sup> As the poet sings on, we are invited to imagine the audience, including the girl, brightening and engaging in more song and amusement as if to reenact and build on the memory already honored by the most talented of the group. This last gathering, where remembrance is the theme, is meant to occupy a special place in the thoughts of the departing girl and to offer her comfort in an alien land and household.

More fragments tell of how those women who stay cope with the loss of their companions. In the comprehensible part of Sappho 22, for example, the speaker tries to help a young woman:

I bid you,  
Abanthis, take (your lyre?) and sing of Gongyla,  
while desire (*pothos*) once again  
flies around you,  
  
the lovely one. For her dress excited you  
When you saw it; and I rejoice . . .

<sup>19</sup> Burnett (1979: 25); Snyder (1989: 25–26).

<sup>20</sup> Lardinois (2001: 83); Rauk (1989). For similar descriptions of the convivial paraphernalia, see poems by Alkaios, Anakreon, and Theognis.

<sup>21</sup> Kamen (2007: 95).

<sup>22</sup> The intriguing statement that the girl satisfied her longing on a soft bed (third stanza from the end) will be examined shortly.

Abanthis and Gongyla are perhaps close friends, and the absence of one, which will be prolonged or even permanent because of her recent marriage, keeps the other longing. Abanthis' emotional states, as brought on by the sight and memory of Gongyla, are described in explicitly erotic terms. Just as seeing Gongyla's dress excited Abanthis before, now "desire" (*pothos*) once again "flies around" (*amphipotatai*) her in the absence of her friend. The mysterious allusion in Sappho 94 to a "longing" (*pothon*, stanza 8, line 23) that the bride-to-be once satisfied "on a soft bed" in the company of her companions is ambiguous enough to allow the purifying interpretation that it refers to a desire for rest induced by vigorous dancing.<sup>23</sup> However, there is no denying the celebration of female homoeroticism in the description of the ties between Abanthis and Gongyla in Sappho 22. Aside from a bold and warm physical touch in their representations of female bonds, Sappho 22 and Sappho 94 also share in placing those bonds in a collective setting. In Sappho 94, the holy places and dances are recalled as witnesses to the good times that the departing young woman spent with her companions. In Sappho 22, the speaker urges Abanthis to take up the lyre and sing of Gongyla. The song may be only about the two friends, but it will be heard by all the women present, involving everyone in a memory of the past and making them cherish even more what they still can enjoy. The departure of one thus provides a cementing force for those left behind, as grief yields to the power of song and companionship. Hence the succinct declaration "and I rejoice" by the speaker, the group's leader. It is perhaps less important to determine whether the collective activities in the Sapphic circle actually involved sexual acts than it is simply to note that for the group, female bonding was conceived in the same language as heterosexual desire and that its strength transcended separation and endured in memory.<sup>24</sup>

The best illustration of the group dynamic of memory and friendship can be found in Sappho 96:

...Sardis...  
often turning her thoughts in this direction

<sup>23</sup> This is the reading adopted by the great German classicist Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1848–1931) (Snyder 1989: 25).

<sup>24</sup> In her analysis of Sappho 22, L. H. Wilson (1996: 54–55) discusses the contrast between the transience of the ties between particular women in Sappho's circle and the stability of the entire community sustained by collective remembrance and celebration. Winkler (1990: 180–187) argues that it is wrong to deny that the "emotional lesbianism of Sappho's work" has a salient physical aspect. See my later discussion of the intertwining of friendship and homoeroticism in Sappho's poetry.

(She honored you)  
as being like a goddess for all to see  
and took most delight in your song.

Now she stands out  
among Lydian women,  
like the rosy-fingered moon after sunset,  
surpassing all the stars, and its light  
spreads alike over the salt sea  
and the flowery fields.

The dew is shed in beauty,  
and roses bloom and tender chervil  
and flowery melilot.

Often as she goes to and fro, she  
remembers gentle Atthis and doubtless  
her tender heart is consumed because of your fate.

To go there... this...  
mind... much  
sings... (in the) middle

It is not easy for us to rival  
goddesses in loveliness of figure...  
of Adonis...

...Aphrodite poured nectar from  
a golden... her hands...  
Persuasion...

the Geraesteum<sup>25</sup>... dear... (shall come?) ...

The context here is similar to that in Sappho 22, though this poem involves a different woman, Atthis, and her close friend who has married and now lives in Lydia. Atthis may have sung of her longings at a female gathering, and Sappho follows up with a poem that is a masterpiece of consolation and persuasion. It falls into three parts. In the first part, the speaker voices the special regard with which the woman who left holds Atthis. This serves to soothe Atthis' emotions by assuring her that her feelings are reciprocated. The praise of Atthis' beauty and musical talent indicates the basis of the two women's friendship and may have been meant as a compliment on the song and dance that Atthis has just performed.

In the next part, which occupies the bulk of the fragment, the speaker further helps Atthis by describing the other woman, who is now dwelling

<sup>25</sup> Campbell's note: "probably the shrine of Poseidon at Geraistos in Euboea."

in a foreign land. The poet's praise of the woman's unsurpassed excellence in her new environment will fill Atthis with pride and bring her comfort. The intricate metaphor, which consists of a series of highly sensual images, invites Atthis to visualize her former companion as living in an atmosphere marked by a radiant and serene beauty. The depiction of the departed woman pacing as she longs for Atthis reassures the latter of the reciprocity of their feelings.<sup>26</sup>

The last part is too much plagued by lacunae to allow any certain interpretation, but it is probable that here the speaker starts to reason with her addressee, with a view to fostering in her a more positive attitude. The reference to Aphrodite's pouring nectar may concern a past event attended by the women over which the goddess of persuasion also presided. Love and persuasion are the supreme powers that unite human beings.<sup>27</sup> If they were at work before, binding the women together through numerous group activities, they will perform a greater magic now, helping the separated companions to maintain their ties through the sharing and renewal of memory.

Whereas Sappho 22, 94, and 96 all sing of women's love for each other and celebrate its power to transcend time and space and to cope with the inevitability of marriage, none of these poems explicitly depicts female bonding in a competing relationship with heterosexual love and family life. That seems to be what Sappho does in fragment 16, however. Its first three stanzas read just like an encomium of passionate heterosexual love by holding up Helen – who fell in love with the Trojan prince Paris and eloped with him – as a paragon:

Some say a host of cavalry, others of infantry,  
and others of ships, is the most beautiful thing  
on the black earth, but I say it is  
whatsoever a person loves.

It is perfectly easy to make this understood  
by everyone: for she who far surpassed  
mankind in beauty, Helen,  
left her most noble husband  
and went sailing off to Troy  
with no thought at all for her child or dear parents,  
But (love) led her astray...

It will turn out, however, that the example of Helen is not adduced to exalt heterosexual love but to lend support to the speaker's claim in the

<sup>26</sup> For a study that focuses on this metaphor, see McEvelley (1973).

<sup>27</sup> On this function of Aphrodite and Persuasion, see van Bremen (2003: 325).

first stanza that “the most beautiful thing on the black earth” is “*whatsoever* a person loves.” For Helen, it happened to be Paris, and she was well justified in eloping with the man she loved without regard for her husband, child, or parents. Helen’s courage in going where her heart took her elicits the speaker’s admiration, but the legendary example inspires the speaker to yearn not for a Prince Charming but for a young woman:

Lightly...  
 (and she?) has reminded me now  
 of Anaktoria  
 who is not here;  
  
 I would rather see her lovely walk  
 And the bright sparkle of her face  
 than the Lydians’ chariots and armed infantry...  
  
 Impossible to happen...  
 Mankind... but to pray to share... unexpectedly.

Like the women who appear in Sappho 22, 94, and 96, Sappho 16’s Anaktoria may well be a recent young bride, and her former companions may be remembering her at their gathering. Again, as in those songs, the speaker uses highly sensual language to express her longing for an absent young woman. The repeated mention of chariots and the infantry, both of which are compared unfavorably to Anaktoria’s lovely gait and bright face, harkens back to the image at the beginning of the poem and makes it clear that for the speaker the bond between Anaktoria and her companions *is* the most beautiful thing in the world. At this point we are compelled to ponder again the speaker’s statement that Helen’s love-driven, destructive deed reminds her of Anaktoria. Given the positive use made of Helen’s example in this poem, is the speaker suggesting that extrafamilial female bonding, as another manifestation of Love, deserves to be pursued with the same passion, and that any consequent disregard for social norms about a woman’s duties (represented by husband, child, and parents, as in Helen’s case) is understandable and even condonable in such pursuit? Although perhaps going too far, such a suggestion is a tantalizing one; at any rate, there is no mistaking the extraordinary assertiveness with which the power of love between women is praised in this poem. The ability of love between women to overcome the obstacles of time and distance has been repeatedly sung of in Sapphic fragments, but in fragment 16 it receives supreme status under the claim that “whatsoever one loves” is the most beautiful.

Sappho has the confidence to make such a claim because she has entered into a special relationship with Aphrodite, the deity who appears the most frequently in her poetry. The central role of love and persuasion in the Sapphic circle can be seen in Sappho 1, the only complete poem in the corpus. The entire poem consists of Sappho's prayer to the love goddess:

Ornate-throned immortal Aphrodite,  
Wile-weaving daughter of Zeus, I entreat you:  
Do not overpower my heart, mistress,  
With ache and anguish,

But come here, if ever in the past  
You heard my voice from afar  
and acquiesced and came,  
leaving your father's golden house,

With chariot yoked: beautiful swift sparrows  
whirring fast-beating wings  
brought you above the dark earth  
down from heaven through the mid-air,

And soon they arrived; and you, blessed one,  
with a smile on your immortal face  
asked what was the matter with me this time  
and why I was calling this time

and what in my maddened heart I most wished  
to happen for myself: "Whom am I to persuade this time  
To lead you back to her love (*philotata*)? Who  
wrongs you, Sappho?

If she runs away, soon she shall pursue;  
if she does not accept gifts, why, she shall give them instead;  
and if she does not love, soon she shall love  
even against her will."

Come to me now again and deliver me  
from oppressive anxieties; fulfill all that  
my heart longs to fulfill, and you yourself  
be my fellow-fighter.

Who is the one that Sappho (self-identified in stanza 5, line 20) asks Aphrodite to persuade to accept her love (*philotata*; *philei* and *philēsei* used in line 23)? Perhaps she is a former associate who has ill-advisedly left for a rival and caused Sappho disappointment and anxiety, as is probably the case in fragments 57 and 71 (discussed earlier). Despite the "wrong" that she suffers (stanza 5), Sappho wants the girl back, perhaps

not just because of her feelings for the fleeing girl but also for the sake of the prestige and solidarity of Sappho's group vis-à-vis a competing circle of women. Aphrodite's resounding assurances to Sappho that one who flees will soon pursue and one who does not love will soon love even if against her own will, are striking for their similarities to the familiar rhetoric of male pederastic courtship.<sup>28</sup> Just as the male adult lover in pursuit of his beloved tries to gain the boy's sympathy and favor by pointing out to him that the boy himself will one day be the compelled pursuer, Sappho hopes to convince the girl using the same reasoning. Her entreaty that Aphrodite be her "fellow-fighter" (*summachos*) in this endeavor and the Iliadic echoes throughout the poem suggest that, for Sappho, just as it was for Greek male eulogists of homoerotic bonds, love is war, bringing terror, frustration, and destruction as well as joy, thrills, and gratification to those involved.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, in this war combatants contend with art and persuasion more than they do with gifts, and for public honor no less than for the gratification of personal feelings. The inevitability of a woman's marrying and the serious disruption that marriage causes for women's friendships may mean that women find this kind of war more frustrating and devastating than do men and must carry it out with greater passion and devotion.

Maximos of Tyre (ca. 125–185), a Roman sophist well-read in Greek literature, posited an explicit structural correspondence between the circles of Sappho and Socrates. Both Sappho and Socrates led a group of protégé(e)s in rivalry against other groups. "What Alkibiades and Kharmides and Phaidros were to him, Gyrimna and Atthis and Anaktoria were to her. What the rival craftsmen Prodicos and Gorgias and Thrasymakhos and Protagoras were to Socrates, Gorgo and Andromeda were to Sappho."<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the parallels between the

<sup>28</sup> The flight-and-pursuit rhetoric in male pederastic courtship was discussed in Chapter 1. Sappho's lines (stanza 6) read in Greek: "kai gar ai pheugei tacheōs diōxei / ai de dōra mē deket' alla dōsei / ai de mē philei tacheōs philēsei / kōuk etheloisa."

<sup>29</sup> Rissman (1983), whose book is entitled *Love as War: Homeric Allusion in the Poetry of Sappho*, explores the correlation between the erotic and the martial in Sappho's poetry. Giacomelli [Carson] (1980) and Marry (1979) analyze the structure of Greek female homosexuality through its parallels with the male model. Dover (1978: 177) believes that the trope of pursuit and flight in Sappho 1 differs from its use in male poetry. He argues that Sappho names herself in the poem and therefore "is not composing both for an imaginary situation and for a fictitious *persona*"; Aphrodite's promise that the girl will soon pursue Sappho and offer her gifts entails erotic reciprocity. Bing and Cohen (1991: 72n3) comment along the same lines. I find the arguments of Giacomelli [Carson] (1980), Marry (1979), and Rissman (1983) more persuasive.

<sup>30</sup> Maximos of Tyre, test. 20 in Loeb.

women's bonds celebrated by Sappho and the webs of men's friendships and homoeroticism portrayed in the world of Alkaios, Theognis, and Socrates cannot be ignored. Sappho was a woman, but a *Greek* woman. Just as Theognis uses the vocabulary of both love (*erōs*) and friendship (*philos*, *philotēta*, *hetairos*, etc.), the two pursuits are intertwined in Sappho's poetry, and Aphrodite is the patron goddess who oversees the cultivation of both kinds of attachments (*philotata* and *pothon*) among the Sapphic circle. Just as Theognis promises immortality to Kynos, Sappho predicts everlasting remembrance for herself and her associates because they are all devotees of the Muses.<sup>31</sup> Just as Alkaios constantly counsels and rallies his comrades and conspirators, Sappho finds cause for song when she and her companions have to cope with the grief of betrayal or separation. Just as Socrates professes that throughout his life he has been in love with the young men that he is committed to educating, Sappho appears as an impassioned admirer, persuader, and leader of the women in her circle as much as she is a fierce detractor of their rivals. All in all, just like Alkaios, Theognis, Socrates, and other male poets and convivialists, Sappho relishes competition for excellence and devotes herself to the pursuit and commemoration of "bittersweet" companionship.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> In Sappho 55, the speaker castigates someone (an enemy?) who has nothing of the gifts of the Muses: "And when you are gone there will be no memory / of you and no regret. For you do not share / the Pierian roses, but unseen in the house of Hades / you will stray, flown from here among the ghostly dead." Then in fragment 147, the speaker pronounces immortality for herself and her associates: "And I say to you someone will remember us / in time to come." These two fragments may have provided the basis for the claims made in a second-century source, "I think you must have heard Sappho too boasting to some of those women reputed to be fortunate and saying that the Muses had made her truly blessed and enviable, and that she would not be forgotten even when she was dead" (fragment 193 in Loeb).

<sup>32</sup> According to Campbell (1983: 18), the idea of love that is simultaneously bitter and sweet is first expressed in Sappho 130, where the speaker confesses that "once again limb-loosening Love makes me tremble, / the bittersweet (*glukupikron*), irresistible creature." The fact that on the papyrus this fragment is followed immediately by fragment 131, in which the speaker addresses Atthis (perhaps the same woman who appears in fragment 96?) and accuses her of betraying the speaker for another woman, suggests that these fragments belong to the same poem and that Sappho uses the word "bittersweet" to characterize love between women. Among male poets, Theognis also describes pederastic love as both bitter and sweet: "Bitter (*pikros*) and sweet (*glukus*), charming and harsh, / Kynos, is love for the young until it is fulfilled. / For if a man achieves, it becomes sweet, but if he pursues and achieves not, / that is of all things the most painful" (lines 1353–1356). For advocating that we recognize the parallels in Sappho and the male poets between sociable contexts and homoerotic sentiments, see H. Parker (1993, 2005) and Yatromanolakis (2007).



*Companions: From Sappho to Erinna*

When discussing Nossis' epigram about the robe that she and her mother wove and dedicated to Hera, I noted how her invoking of the names of three generations of women in her family in the dedication was suggestive of Sappho 98a in which a mother discusses hair decoration with her daughter by recalling conversations that she had had with her own mother. Whether or not a parallel is valid in this instance, it is a matter of fact that Nossis was the first woman poet in Western literary history to openly declare her emulation of Sappho.<sup>33</sup> Nossis makes her proud proclamation in an epigram:

Stranger, if you sail to Mytilene, the city of lovely dances  
which kindled Sappho, the flower of the Graces,  
say that the Lokrian land bore one dear to the Muses  
and equal to her and that her name was Nossis. Go!"<sup>34</sup>

In another epigram Nossis, reminiscent of Sappho, exalts Aphrodite (Kypriis) as the patron deity of her art:

"Nothing is sweeter than love; all delightful things  
are second to it, and even honey I spit from my mouth."  
Thus says Nossis, but if there is one whom Kypriis has not kissed,  
she does not know what flowers roses are.<sup>35</sup>

Given the fame of Sappho and her female companions and Nossis' conscious emulation of her predecessor, can the fourth-century BCE woman poet be referring to women's love for each other when she announces that love is her favorite subject?

This question is difficult to answer. Six of Nossis' remaining nine poems are about women's portraits or about women's dedications to Aphrodite. Kathryn Gutzwiller argues that, like Sappho's poetry, Nossis' portrait and dedication poems celebrate women's sensual beauty and

<sup>33</sup> In the intervening centuries, Sappho and her circle seem to have provided an important model for Greek ideas about the social context of women's songs. It is widely believed, for example, that the large numbers of fifth-century BCE Athenian vase images of all-female gatherings featuring musical performances and poetry recitations were modeled on Sappho and her female circle (see, e.g., Bernard 1985: 48 and Williams 1993:100). Cf. Yatromanolakis' (2007: 143–160) different opinion.

<sup>34</sup> *AP* 7.718. It has been suggested that this epigram served as the epilogue for the collection of Nossis' poetry (Snyder 1989: 79).

<sup>35</sup> *AP* 5.170. The striking opening declaration states, "*Hadion ouden erōtos*." Given the programmatic nature of this poem, it may have served as the prologue for Nossis' poetic collection (Gutzwiller 1997: 213; Skinner 1989).

highlight the “erotic excitement caused by [the women’s] presence.”<sup>36</sup> A problem with this provocative reading is that the three dedicatory poems, particularly the one that refers to the great wealth a woman named Polyarkhis has “gained from her own splendid body” and used in making an offering to Aphrodite, may well have been composed for courtesans (for whom the love goddess was the patron deity).<sup>37</sup> Without knowing the identities of the women in the dedicatory epigrams, it would be unwarranted to infer from them the social context of Nossis’ poetic composition. However, it is still possible to argue on the basis of the three portrait poems, which praise the women’s tenderness, joyfulness, dignity, and wisdom, and the resemblance between mother and daughter, that Nossis constructs a woman’s world that may be considered her own “Sapphic circle.”<sup>38</sup> The weakness of this attractive interpretation is that the portrait descriptions are generally static and provide hardly any clues about the existence of a circle whose members engage in common activities and share emotions and memories.

If Nossis, despite her stated Sapphic inspiration, leaves us with less than certain evidence about the lineage of her poetic creations; the Sapphic tradition that celebrates women’s friendships was clearly carried on by Erinna (fl. 350 BCE). Although she hailed from the small island of Telos and allegedly died unmarried at the age of nineteen, Erinna enjoyed an exceptional reputation as a poet.<sup>39</sup> Of the four poems attributed to Erinna, one is an inscription for a girl’s portrait and the other three, two epigrams and a poem of 300 lines in epic meter, are about a childhood friend named Baukis who died shortly after her wedding. The relationship between Baukis and “Erinna” (the name of the girl who appears in the poems as Baukis’ close friend) is clearly revealed in one of the two epigrams, which takes the form of the dead Baukis’ address to the furnishings on her own tomb. After instructing them on what to tell passersby – who she is and where she is from – Baukis asks, in the last two lines of the epigram, that it be known that her companion (*synetairis*) Erinna engraved these verses on her tomb.<sup>40</sup> This climactic

<sup>36</sup> Gutzwiller (1997: 215, 216).

<sup>37</sup> Snyder (1989: 80) takes Polyarkhis’ courtesan status to be certain and surmises that the other two dedications were also composed for courtesans. Gutzwiller (1997) does not bring up the issue of the women’s identity in discussing how the erotic elements in the three poems are reminiscent of Sappho’s poetry.

<sup>38</sup> Gutzwiller (1997: 216–219; reference to Nossis’ own “Sapphic circle” on p. 203).

<sup>39</sup> On what little is known of Erinna’s life and the numerous testimonials to her literary status, see Gutzwiller (1997: 203–204, 210) and Snyder (1989: 86–90).

<sup>40</sup> AP 7.710. The revelation of the relationship between Erinna and Baukis: “*kai hotti moi ha synetairis/ ērinna en tumbōi gramm’ echaraxe tode*.” The other epigram (AP 7. 712), in

disclosure undoubtedly indicates the special relationship between the two friends in Baukis' lifetime. But it is from *The Distaff*, the long poem on which Erinna's poetic reputation was built,<sup>41</sup> that we gain insight into the profound impact that the death of Baukis exerted on "Erinna." The highly fragmented text of *The Distaff* reads:

1-14 of a girl... maidens [or dolls]... tortoise...  
 tortoise... wave  
 15 from white horses  
 16 I shouted loudly... tortoise...  
 17 the yard of the great court...  
 18 wretched Baukis, I cry out this lament...  
 19 these games lie in my heart  
 20 still warm. But [those are] already ashes.  
 21 of dolls... in the bed-chambers...  
 22 maidens [or dolls]... once at dawn  
 23 Mother... to the wool-workers  
 24 ...sprinkled with salt  
 25 little... Mormo brought fear.  
 26 ...she roamed on her four feet  
 27 and changed her visage from [one thing to another].  
 28 But when into the bed..., you forgot everything  
 29 which still in your innocence... having heard your mother,  
 30 dear Baukis. Forgetfulness... Aphrodite.  
 31 Therefore you, weeping... but other things I leave;  
 32 for my feet [are] not permitted... from the house,  
 33 nor [am I able] to look upon a corpse, nor to lament  
 34 with uncovered hair... shame  
 35 tears me around my cheeks...  
 36-54 nineteen... Erinna... distaff... shame...  
 maiden-songs... looking... hair... dear Baukis...  
 flame... Hymenaios... Hymenaios... alas,  
 wretched Baukis...<sup>42</sup>

That the first twenty-seven lines of *The Distaff* seem to be devoted to childhood games and toys suggests that the friendship between Baukis and "Erinna" started early in their lives. The note on the "still warm" memories of the games highlights both the shortness of Baukis' life and the utterly unprepared state "Erinna" finds herself in upon Baukis' death. The references to maiden songs, wool working, and the distaff

the voice of Baukis' tomb, tells of the bride's death, which occurred soon after the wedding.

<sup>41</sup> She was praised as the "equal of Homer" for composing this poem (*AP* 9.190).

<sup>42</sup> For the text, see West (1977). The translation is by Jane McIntosh Snyder (1989: 93). Gutzwiller (1997: 205-206) also provides a full translation of the fragment.

may indicate that choruses, weaving, and spinning were among the common activities that the two girls engaged in when they grew up.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps the full poem contained more descriptions of weaving and spinning or even endowed these activities with symbolic significance. Perhaps that is how the poem acquired its popular title, *The Distaff*. If before they sang together in the young women's choruses and at the loom, now "Erinna" sings to relieve her grief over the loss of her dear friend and over her inability to attend the funeral.<sup>44</sup>

Various theories, all necessarily speculative, have been advanced as to why "Erinna" was prohibited from attending Baukis' funeral (lines 32–35). Perhaps it was because the law forbade the presence of women of childbearing age at funerals, or because "Erinna" was a priestess and was forbidden to look upon a corpse, or she was not a relative, or she was too ill to leave the house, or her mother did not want her to associate with Baukis, who had become too bold in her behavior after marriage.<sup>45</sup> Whatever the reason for her absence, the poem testifies to "Erinna's" love for her companion and demonstrates the role of song in sustaining and affirming female friendships in the Greek world. Ancient sources claimed that Erinna composed *The Distaff* when she was nineteen, the same age she was when she died.<sup>46</sup> It could have been a coincidence, and that Erinna's death bore no relation to the mishap of a childhood friend named Baukis. It is also possible that the commentators made up the

<sup>43</sup> Stehle (2001: 184) discusses an actual fourth-century BCE epitaph from Khios that praises the dead woman for having practiced "clever work" with her hands, clearly referring to weaving or wool working.

<sup>44</sup> Both Gutzwiller (1997: 210) and Stehle (2001: 197) imagine that Erinna, unable to attend Baukis' funeral, stayed home at her weaving.

<sup>45</sup> West (1977: 108–109); Bowra (1936: 334); Skinner (1982: 268–269); Rauk (1989: 102–107); Stehle (2001: 191–196). Stehle builds her argument by comparing these lines in Erinna's poem ("when into the bed . . . you forgot everything / which still in your innocence . . . having heard from your mother / dear Baukis") to an anonymous epigram on Erinna (AP 9.190) that purports to explain the circumstances surrounding the composition of *The Distaff* ("Apply herself to her distaff out of fear of her mother / and working at her loom, she stood as servant of the Muses"). According to Stehle, Baukis used to heed her mother's teachings about domestic work and the virtues of modesty and self-control but, under the influence of Aphrodite, she may have become "physically too expressive or playful or assertive following her marriage." Stehle (2001: 197) interprets the word "*aidōs*" (shame, modesty) in line 42 to be an indication of the conflict in "Erinna's" feelings between reverence for her mother and love for her dead friend. Gutzwiller (1997: 209–210) takes *aidōs* to mean the restraint that "Erinna" feels as a maiden, although Gutzwiller emphasizes that it is a restraint imposed on her by a male-dominant society.

<sup>46</sup> AP 9.190, 7.11, *Suda*. The word "nineteen" appears in the last visible section of Erinna's poem.

coincidence, intending to create pathos out of a talented young girl's perishing after having written her best work. Perhaps we should read even greater pathos into the tremendous impact the death of a friend could exert on a young Greek woman. As has been noted by many, Erinna's mournful poems about Baukis harken back to Sappho 94 and 96, which contain the laments of female friends over the departure of one of them for marriage, an experience conceived of as akin to death for women in ancient Greece.<sup>47</sup> Death or marriage, it was about the pain of separation for close friends, even as the women affected continuously tried to pay tribute to the ties of companionship by holding onto their memories and commemorating them in song.

Stehle has noted that whereas there are two or three isolated examples of women memorializing non-kin women in the epitaphs of the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, the phenomenon does not seem to be manifest in the fourth century BCE.<sup>48</sup> Erinna's poems about Baukis demonstrate, however, that a strong tradition of the celebration of female friendships persisted among Greek women, transcending time, place, and genre. The author of *The Distaff* and of the epigram in which the dead Baukis announces that the verses on the stele were composed by her friend Erinna could well have written the following epitaph by Euthylla, a woman in late fifth-century BCE Athens:

For the sake of faithful and sweet friendship (*pistēs hēdeias philotētos*),  
your companion (*hetaira*) Euthylla set up this stele on your grave,  
Biote. For having always tearful memory  
of your perished youth she cries.<sup>49</sup>

From Sappho to Euthylla to Erinna, friendship was an eternal, most prominent theme in Greek women's memories and songs.

### China: Husbands, In-Laws, and Parents

In his *Biographies of Women*, a collection of life stories of legendary and historical Chinese women (with dates mostly in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods), Liu Xiang (ca. 79–8 BCE) attributes the

<sup>47</sup> On the conceptual and ritual similarities between marriage and death in ancient Greece, see Lardinois (2001: 82). The similarities between *The Distaff* and Sappho 94 and 96 have been pointed out by Gutzwiller (1997: 207), Rauk (1989), Skinner (1982: 269n13), and Snyder (1989: 96). Skinner, moreover, sees conscious imitation of Sappho in the use of the Aeolic dialect in *The Distaff*.

<sup>48</sup> Stehle (2001: 183–185).

<sup>49</sup> Stehle (2001: 182).

TABLE 5.1. *Odes attributed to women in Liu Xiang's Biographies of Women*

Woman	Poem attributed to her	Purpose of composition	Chapter in <i>LNZ</i>
Ding Jiang of Wei	Ode 28 ("Yan yan," Swallow, Swallow)	Expressing affection and sorrow when widowed daughter-in-law returns to her natal family	1
Governess of Zhuang Jiang of Wei	Ode 57 ("Shuo ren," A Splendid Woman)	Exhorting Zhuang Jiang to be chaste and ritually appropriate	1
Wife of official in Zhounan	Ode 10 ("Ru fen," Banks of the Ru)	Encouraging husband to devote himself to government service away from home in order to have the means to support his parents	2
Lady Mu of Xu	Ode 54 ("Zai chi," Gallop)	Expressing regret over inability to be of help when native country falls under invasion	3
Daughter of Shen in Shaonan	Ode 17 ("Hang lu," Path with Dew)	Refusing to marry her fiancé without proper rites	4
Widowed Lady of Wei	Ode 26 ("Bo zhou," Cypress Boat)	Expressing loyalty to dead husband	4
Wife of man of Cai	Ode 8 ("Fu yi," Plantain)	Refusing to abandon husband who suffers from obnoxious disease	4
Lady Zhuang of Li	Ode 36 ("Shi wei," How Few)	Expressing loyalty to husband who does not love her	4
Lady of Xi	Ode 73 ("Da ju," My Great Carriage)	Expressing determination to die out of loyalty to husband when her country falls under invasion and she is taken into the victor's palace	4

authorship of nine poems in the *Odes* to women who are distinguished for various virtues.<sup>50</sup> These stories about the putative female authors are listed in Table 5.1.

<sup>50</sup> *LNZ* 1.5b–6b (Ding Jiang of Wei), 1.6b–7a (governess of Zhuang Jiang of Wei), 2.4b–5a (wife of official in Zhounan), 3.2b–3a (Lady Mu of Xu), 4.1b–2a (daughter of Shen

TABLE 5.2. *Distribution of interpersonal relationships in odes attributed to women in Biographies of Women*

Interpersonal relationship	Number of poems
Wife and husband (woman and fiancé in one case)	6
Daughter-in-law, husband, and parents-in-law	1
Mother-in-law and daughter-in-law	1
Married daughter and natal family	1

As can be seen from the table, there are four stories about women who compose poetry to express their steadfast loyalty to their husbands despite adverse circumstances. Two other stories (featuring the governess of Zhuang Jiang of Wei and the daughter of Shen in Shaonan) are also about the importance of wifely chastity and ritual propriety in the matrimonial relationship. Of the remaining three, one (attributed to wife of official in Zhounan) shows a woman as a good daughter-in-law who puts her parents-in-law's welfare first, one (attributed to Ding Jiang of Wei) depicts a loving mother-in-law saddened by the departure of her widowed daughter-in-law, and the last one (attributed to Lady Mu of Xu) registers a married woman's deep concern for her natal family, which is in crisis. The distribution of the interpersonal relationships involved in the poems that Liu Xiang ascribes to women is shown in Table 5.2.

Not all of Liu Xiang's attributions were endorsed by contemporary or later commentators, and many other poems have been ascribed to female authors by authorities on the *Odes* between the Han and modern times.<sup>51</sup> In fact, in dealing with anonymous songs composed in a

in Shaonan), 4.2b–3a (widowed Lady of Wei), 4.3a–3b (wife of man of Cai), 4.3b–4a (Lady Zhuang of Li), 4.5a (Lady of Xi).

<sup>51</sup> A few examples illustrate the convergence and divergence of the attributions made by Liu Xiang (usually considered a partisan of the Lu commentarial tradition) and of those made by other classical commentators. Han Ying (fl. 150 BCE), the master of the Han commentarial tradition, attributes the same circumstances to the composition of Ode 17 but without identifying the woman as the daughter of Shen in Shaonan (HSWZ 1.5). Liu Xiang's attributions of Odes 10 and 54 are shared by numerous other commentators. The attribution of Ode 28 is an interesting case. Although Liu Xiang reads it as a poem by a mother-in-law who is seeing off her son's widowed wife, Mao attributes it to Zhuang Jiang of Wei, who allegedly composed the song at the departure of a secondary consort who was returning to her native country after the death of that consort's son (MSZ 298).

On the Han dynasty as the period during which the concept of the individual authorship of literary works came to be entrenched, see Owen (2006, ch. 5). It was within the same Han environment that the *Odes* began to acquire the historicizing

language that has no grammatical gender markers, and because most of the odes traditionally ascribed to women concern the intricate emotions of love and desire, it is not surprising that different readers see things differently, be it about the ode's theme or about the sex of its author. Thus there can be no assurance that the female authorship of certain odes is beyond doubt. However, the relationship-based distribution of the odes that Liu Xiang attributes to women is significant. Of all the odes that have been associated with female authorship in the classical commentarial tradition, there is no song about the mother–daughter bond or about women's friendships. Instead, husbands, in-laws, and parents (among other natal relatives) are the focus of the sentiments – be it the anguish of separation, a concern with family welfare, or a delight in festivities – expressed in the odes for which a female speaker has been identified. Despite the discrepancies among the identifications made by different commentators, the range of major interpersonal relationships in women's poetry as interpreted by Liu Xiang overlaps with what emerges from readings by other classical commentators.

Because no amount of discussion can yield any solid conclusion about which odes were actually composed by women, it would be pointless to go through all of the poems that have ever been attributed to a female author. In the following I will discuss only a few odes from among those pieces that have had strong support and sometimes consensus in the commentarial traditions. My purpose is to confirm what has already been said about the range of relationships in the odes believed to be by women and to set up a comparative discussion on the relationship between female subjectivity and male imagination.

### *Husband*

Many odes contain the voices of women whose husbands are away from home because of war, office holding, or some other business. Ode 62 (“Bo xi,” My Lord Is Brave), which is one of the most famous such pieces, reads:

readings exemplified by the Mao tradition (second century BCE). Thanks to its promotion by Zheng Xuan, the Mao tradition came to prevail over the competing Qi, Lu, and Han traditions from the third century CE onward. On Liu Xiang's affiliation with the Lu tradition, see Lin (1996: 115–129). See Lin Yaolin (1996) and Zhao Maolin (2006) on the three non-Mao traditions in the Han dynasty, and see Kern (2007) on the survival of the Lu tradition into the Six Dynasties period (ca. 3rd–6th centuries). Chen Tongsheng (2004, ch. 4) examines the relationship between the Han commentarial traditions and a preimperial tradition that has survived in fragments in “Confucius' discussion of the *Odes*.”



Heigh, my lord is brave;<sup>52</sup>  
 Greatest hero in the land!  
 My lord, grasping his lance,  
 Is outrider of the king.

Since my lord went to the east,  
 My head has been tousled as the tumbleweed.  
 It is not that I lack grease to dress it with;  
 But for whom should I want to look nice?

Oh, for rain, oh, for rain!  
 And instead the sun shines dazzling.  
 All this longing for my lord  
 Brings weariness to the heart, aching to the head.

Where can I get a day-lily,<sup>53</sup>  
 To plant behind the house?  
 All this longing for my lord,  
 Can but bring me heart's pain.

(Cheng and Jiang 185–189;  
 Waley 53, modified)

The same theme of lonely wives pining for their absent husbands and examining their suffering hearts in solitude finds other variations in the *Odes*. Ode 66 (“Jun zi yu yi,” My Lord Is On Service) is one example:

My lord is on service;  
 He did not know for how long.  
 Oh, when will he come?  
 The fowls are roosting in their holes,  
 Another day is ending,  
 The sheep and cows are coming down.  
 My lord is on service;  
 How can I not be sad?

My lord is on service;  
 Not a matter of days, nor months.  
 Oh, when will he be here again?  
 The fowls are roosting on their perches,  
 Another day is ending,  
 The sheep and cows have all come down.

<sup>52</sup> Waley translates this line as “Heigh, Bo is brave,” and Karlgren as “Oh my lord, oh you martial one.” Following Zhu Xi (*SJZ* 3: 26b–28a), Fang Yurun (*SY* 4:185–186), and modern critics such as Chen Zizhan (1983: 194), Cheng and Jiang (186), and Qu Wanli (1953: 49), I understand *bo* 伯 as a term that a wife uses of her husband and have substituted the phrase “my lord” for Waley’s *Bo* throughout the poem.

<sup>53</sup> This is a plant believed able to induce forgetfulness.

My lord is on service;  
 Were I but sure that he gets drink and food!  
   (Cheng and Jiang 197-199;  
   Waley 57-58)

Watching the activities marking the end of a day, the woman in the preceding poem misses her husband, who, unlike the roosting fowls and the sheep and cows herded home, does not have a set time for return.<sup>54</sup> Her thoughts fluctuate between the scenes before her eyes (lines 4-6, 12-14), her own feelings (lines 1-3, 7-11), and concern for her husband's welfare (lines 15-16). In comparison with the intense expressions of longing in some odes (like Ode 62 and like another ode to be discussed shortly), the current piece perhaps better illustrates how a woman copes with her daily life while her husband is away. As Wang Zhi (1127-1189) would have it, the woman is a farmer's wife living in the suburbs, and her longing for her husband is aroused at dusk, the time most conducive to the rise of such feelings, when she goes about their farm making sure that the chickens and pasturing animals are all home.<sup>55</sup>

The yearning that the woman expresses for her absent man in Ode 66 is subdued compared to what we encounter in Ode 229 ("Bai hua," White Flower). Zhu Xi believes that this poem was composed by the queen of King You (r. 781-771 BCE), the last king of the Western Zhou.<sup>56</sup> King You's infatuation with a consort (which was to such an extent that he abandoned his queen and put the other woman in her place) is said to have brought about the fall of the kingdom.<sup>57</sup> In the opening stanzas of the poem, the image of an estranged wife, queen or not,<sup>58</sup> is contrasted with nature imagery that connotes attachment and closeness:

The white-flower is twisted into bast,  
 The white reeds are bound in bundles.

<sup>54</sup> Zhu Xi (*SJZ* 4: 3b-4a). Other classical commentators who take the poem to be the expression of a woman's longing for her absent husband include Yao Jiheng (*ST* 5.134), Fang Yurun (*SY* 5.192-193), and Wang Xianqian (*SSY* 4.3-4).

<sup>55</sup> Wang Zhi, *SZW* 4.64.

<sup>56</sup> Zhu Xi (*SJZ* 15.6a).

<sup>57</sup> The Mao tradition already drew a connection between the composition of this poem and King You's irresponsible behavior, although Mao believed that the "people of Zhou" composed the poem to criticize the consort (*MSZ* 496).

<sup>58</sup> Following Zhu Xi, Yao Jiheng (*ST* 12.368) and Fang Yurun (*SY* 12.465) attributed the poem to King You's queen. Qu Wanli (1953: 200) and Wang Jingzhi (1968: 494) reject this attribution and read the poem as the lament of an unknown abandoned woman.

But my lord is estranged from me,  
Lets me be all alone.

White clouds spread across the sky,  
There is dew on sedge and reed.  
Heaven is verging toward calamity;  
My lord makes no plan.

Despite her lord's abandonment of her, the woman cannot help being filled with thoughts of him. He is the object of her longing and the subject of her song, as she admits in the next two stanzas:

The Biao Pond northward flowing  
Wets those paddy fields.  
Full of woe is this song I chant,  
Thinking of that tall person.

They have gathered that brushwood of the mulberry-tree,  
High it blazes in the furnace.  
To think of that tall person  
Truly scorches my heart.

Whereas the paddy fields irrigated by the pond's water make the woman pity herself for being deprived of the man's attention, the misuse of the wood of the mulberry tree (supposedly of fine quality and thus fit for better purposes than feeding the furnace) is an analogy for her own disgrace.<sup>59</sup> Her plaintive song will only take on greater pathos when it is set side by side with the convivial activities that the man seems to be conducting in his house, as shown in the next stanza, perhaps in the company of his new beloved. The cheerful music that reaches the speaker's ears painfully reminds her of her exclusion and isolation, but

<sup>59</sup> The interpretation adopted here, of the symbolic significance of the irrigation of the paddy fields and of the misuse of the mulberry tree wood, was first advanced by Zheng Xuan (*MSZ* 496) and widely followed by later commentators. Zheng Xuan understands the "tall person" (*shuo ren* 碩人) to be a reference to the woman's female rival (i.e., the consort whom King You favored in place of his queen). Zhu Xi (*SJZ* 15.6b–7a), however, believes that the phrase refers to King You. Both readings have a large following among commentators ancient and modern, and the translation of the term as "tall man" or "big man" by Waley (218) and Karlgren (1950: 182) indicates the influence of Zhu Xi. Here we have a case of interpretive ambiguity because the nouns and pronouns in classical Chinese do not possess gender. To keep this linguistic ambiguity, I have substituted "tall person" for Waley's "tall man" / "big man" here and in the rest of the poem, but I have followed Zhu Xi in interpreting the lines in which the term appears as an expression of the female speaker's resentment against the man (and not against her female rival, as Zheng read it).

her own woeful song does not so much convey grievance and protest as it does yearning:

Drums and bells in the house!  
One can hear them from outside.  
Thinking of you I am in misery –  
How you looked at me without love.

There is a pelican on the dam,  
A crane in the wood.  
Thinking of that big person  
Truly frets my heart.

Protest does surface, however, as the woman's apparently tireless expression of grief and longing draws toward its end. The man is unfavorably compared to the mandarin duck, a symbol of conjugal fidelity, and the woman who until this point has not uttered a word of disapproval about her lord, finally brings herself to charge him with being fickle:

There are mandarin-ducks on the dam;  
They fold their left wings.<sup>60</sup>  
My lord is not good;  
Twofold, threefold he gives his favors.

The accusation “my lord is not good 之子無良,” which is all the stronger for its simplicity and forthrightness, is perhaps the most striking line in this poem about the pain of abandonment. The note of protest will not be sustained, however. Quickly halting her probably unexpected outbreak of frustration, the woman resumes the tone that characterized the preceding six stanzas. In fact, her spirit seems to have reached a new low by the end of the poem, as she speaks disparagingly of herself in comparison to a stepping-stone:

Lopsided is that stone;  
If you tread on it, it goes down.  
My lord is estranged from me,  
And leaves me to my misery.

(Cheng and Jiang 729–734;  
Waley 217–218, modified)

<sup>60</sup> Waley writes, “There is a mandarin-duck on the dam; / It folds its left wing.” I have changed the singulars to plurals, since mandarin ducks are known for always being in pairs and this is precisely the duck's special significance in the poem.

The stepping-stone, lowly as it is, still incurs the woman's envy because it will be trod on by her lord whereas she is completely denied his attention.<sup>61</sup> It may be significant that the two closing lines of the stanza (and of the poem) ("My lord is estranged from me, / And leaves me to my misery") roughly repeat the last two lines of the opening stanza (But my lord is estranged from me, / Lets me be all alone").<sup>62</sup> The circular structure of the poem makes it clearer that the woman's angry outburst against the fickle man a few lines before is a fleeting flash. The speaker's return to the expression of her yearning for her estranged lord confirms the tone and motif that governs this lament of an abandoned woman. Sandwiched between the recurrent articulations of sorrow and attachment, the two-line protest in the penultimate stanza is feeble and only highlights the woman's fall into a deeper state of helplessness and self-pity in the comparison with the stepping-stone at the beginning of the last stanza.<sup>63</sup>

#### *Husband and Parents-in-Law*

Ode 10 ("Ru fen," Banks of the Ru) has been read as conveying the sentiments of a woman whose husband is away and who refers to her parents-in-law when she expresses longing for her husband. Here is the poem:

I go along the high banks of the Ru  
Cutting faggots from the bough.  
I have not yet seen my lord;  
I feel a pang as of morning hunger.

I go along the high banks of the Ru  
Cutting boughs that have been lopped and grown again.  
At last I have seen my lord;  
He has not left me for ever.

<sup>61</sup> I follow Hu Chenggong (1776–1832) (*MSH* 22. 36–37) and Ma Ruichen (*MZT* 23.784) in thus interpreting the significance of the stepping-stone. Read this way, it completes the series of contrasts that the poem draws between the woman's treatment by the man and the nature imagery (the reeds bound in bundles, the paddy fields wetted by the pond's water, the mandarin ducks). Zheng Xuan believes that the queen had shared the king's ritual privilege of using a stepping-stone for getting into a carriage, and Kong Yingda adds that the sight of the stepping-stone saddens the queen because it reminds her of her fall from grace (*MSZ* 497).

<sup>62</sup> Lines 3–4 of the first stanza: *zhi zi zhi yuan, bi wo du xi* 之子之遠俾我獨兮; lines 3–4 of the last stanza: *zhi zi zhi yuan, bi wo qi xi* 之子之遠俾我疢兮.

<sup>63</sup> More examples of odes that have been widely understood as wives' longings for their husbands: Odes 14 ("Cao chong," The Cicada), 19 ("Yin qi lei," Deep Rolls the Thunder), 33 ("Xiong zhi," Cock Pheasant), and 226 ("Cai lü," Gathering Green).

The bream has a red tail;  
 The royal house is ablaze.  
 But though it is ablaze,  
 Father and mother are very near.<sup>64</sup>

Liu Xiang, who believes that the author of this poem is the wife of an official who is serving away from home, constructs the circumstances of its composition in a story in his *Biographies of Women* (LNZ 2.4b–5a). In that account, the wife shares with a female neighbor what she and her husband talked about when he was still around, that is, that although the government is tyrannical, a man who has parents should not only serve it but also try to acquit his duties without fault. Only by doing so can he acquire the means to support his parents and spare them from anxiety. According to Liu Xiang, it is during this chat with her neighbor that the wife composes Ode 10, the last stanza of which he quotes in his account.<sup>65</sup> In the context constructed by Liu Xiang, the last stanza makes the best sense read as follows: despite the recognition of the precarious situation that the state is in – symbolized by the royal house that is ablaze like the red tail of the bream – the man has no choice but to devote himself to government service for the sake of his parents, whose welfare should always be on his mind (“father and mother are very near”).<sup>66</sup>

The didactic message in Liu Xiang’s reading of Ode 10 is that a man has to make compromises in his life choices for the sake of his parents.

<sup>64</sup> Cheng and Jiang 25–27; Waley 11, modified. Waley takes the last stanza to be the words of the returning husband and puts the speech in quotation marks. I read it as a continuation of the woman’s thoughts or speech. I have also modified Waley’s translation of the last line, “My father and mother are very dear.” The Chinese original is 父母孔邇. As will be seen, Waley’s translation, while not literal, is actually in keeping with my interpretation of this line.

<sup>65</sup> In one of the nine stories about the putative female authors in the *Odes*, Liu Xiang does not quote from the poem that he attributes to a woman. In seven stories, he quotes either a stanza or two to four lines of the poem. In the remaining story, he quotes two stanzas.

<sup>66</sup> This is Zheng Xuan’s reading of the last stanza (MSZ 283). Along the same lines, Ma Ruichen interprets “father and mother are very near” (父母孔邇) in terms of one of the two duties that Confucius said a person could learn to discharge from studying the *Odes*: “the more immediate duty of serving one’s father” and “the remoter one of serving one’s prince” (邇之事父遠之事君, *Analects* 17.9, tr. Legge) (MZT 2.68). According to Wang Xianqian, the Lu tradition (which Liu Xiang followed) agrees with the Zheng reading of Ode 10’s last stanza, although it adopts a different line of reasoning: “because father and mother cannot go far away from the tyrannical state, one has to serve diligently in order not to get oneself into trouble and cause them concern” (SSY 1.41).

More specifically, he must compromise when it is a matter of choosing between working for a nonideal government and not being able to support his aging parents. This reading is shared by other Han dynasty commentarial traditions on the *Odes*. In an entry in *Han Ying's Illustrations of the Didactic Application of the Book of Odes* (*Han Shi waizhuan*), for example, the last two lines of Ode 10 are quoted to conclude the discussion on the choice that a gentleman must make between devoting himself to moral cultivation and serving in the government to earn a living for his parents.<sup>67</sup> Zheng Xuan's exegesis on Ode 10 makes the same point.<sup>68</sup> What is perhaps most noteworthy about Liu Xiang's reading of Ode 10 is that he attributes to a woman the origin of what was regarded as a canonical poetic statement on the priority that filial duty ought to enjoy over individual pursuits.<sup>69</sup> The familiar message becomes more powerful and compelling in Liu Xiang's presentation because a wife, who potentially could distract her husband from his obligations to his parents, is here shown as helping him fulfill those obligations.

There is no lack of later commentators who believed that Ode 10 was the work of a woman, though they dispensed with the narrative framework and cast of characters ingeniously conceived by Liu Xiang. Taking the poem to have been composed by a certain woman who rejoices at her husband's return from his journey, Zhu Xi explains that the first stanza records her reminiscences of how she longed for him during his absence. Zhu Xi's reading implicitly relates the composition of the poem to the exchanges between the husband and wife at their reunion.<sup>70</sup> Ma Ruichen articulates this implied circumstance more clearly in his interpretation of Ode 10. According to him, in the first stanza the woman recalls her state of mind in the days of her husband's absence, in the second stanza she expresses her joy over her husband's return, and in the last stanza, in the wake of her joyous moments, she begins to worry about the prospect of her husband's embarking on the road again.<sup>71</sup> Ma's

<sup>67</sup> HSWZ 1.57. A poor Eastern Han scholar named Zhou Pan, who was apparently a follower of the Han tradition on the *Odes*, is said to have been inspired by Ode 10 to seek office in order to support his mother (SSY 1.38).

<sup>68</sup> See note 66.

<sup>69</sup> Chin (2006) argues that a key innovation of the Mao tradition was its introduction of the female ethical subject. The authorial attributions and narrative framings in the *Biographies of Women* suggest that the Lu tradition was no less invested in a project to shape the female ethical subject via the *Odes*, which had been a prestigious pedagogical tool for centuries.

<sup>70</sup> Zhu Xi, *SJZ* 1.13b–14b.

<sup>71</sup> Ma Ruichen, *MZT* 2.68.

reading, which gives drama to the sentiments and events of the poem, makes the last stanza especially interesting for our purposes. Following his logic, it would be plausible to interpret the last stanza as the woman's attempt to read her husband's mind and to plead with him: aren't you aware of the perilous situation of the state? What can you possibly do to help? Instead of engaging in a futile undertaking that takes you repeatedly away from home, wouldn't it be better to devote yourself to what you could and should do, that is, to stay home and take care of your parents?<sup>72</sup>

We recall that in Liu Xiang's reading of Ode 10 the last stanza serves an opposite purpose for the putative female author, who urges her husband to work hard under a tyrannical government so that he might have the wherewithal to support his parents. Despite this discrepancy in the scenarios conjured up for the composition of the poem and in the reasoning supplied for the putative female author in Liu Xiang and Ma Ruichen, one thing is certain about the two commentators' understandings of the structure of family relationships inferable from the poem. That is, between husband and wife stand a man's parents, and just as their parents' welfare frequently appears as the preoccupation of the male speakers in the *Odes*,<sup>73</sup> it also constitutes a central consideration in a married woman's ethical universe and provides the most persuasive argument a woman has in trying to make her case with her husband. In the account by Liu Xiang, the wife uses it to exhort her husband to serve; in the reading by Ma Ruichen, the woman raises it in an attempt to keep her husband home. In either interpretation, what the woman herself wants or feels ultimately takes second place to the interests of the husband's parents. She may actually care more about what good her husband's decision to stay home or to stay away would bring to herself, both materially and emotionally speaking, but the most compelling argument in her favor is to be found not in pouring out her own feelings and thoughts but in pleading in the name of her parents-in-law.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Cheng and Jiang (27) and Zhang Xuebo (1976: 14), subscribing to Ma Ruichen's reading, explicitly interpret the last stanza as the woman's effort to persuade her husband not to leave his parents again.

<sup>73</sup> Examples of poems in which men, typically those who travel, express anxiety about their aging parents who lack support: Odes 110 ("Zhi hu," Climb the Wooded Hill), 121 ("Bao yu," The Bustard's Plumes), 162 ("Si mu," Four Steeds), 185 ("Qi fu," Minister of War), 205 ("Bei shan," Northern Hills).

<sup>74</sup> Ma Ruichen (*MZT* 2.68) remarks that the woman conducts herself "correctly" by showing concern for her parents-in-law instead of worrying that her husband will again leave her behind. Modern commentators who see the same triangular relationship in



*"Far Away from Parents and Brothers"*

The burden of being a wife and daughter-in-law in her husband's family may be such that isolation and depression lead a woman to long for her natal family. The fact that natal relatives are often not within her reach, because of either physical distance or the expectation that a married woman will make her husband's family the chief object of her loyalty, accounts for the strong sense of solitude and frustration in the poems that seem to express women's longing for their natal kin (with no focus on the mother-daughter bond, however).<sup>75</sup> From a comparative view, what is most conspicuously absent in early Chinese poetry is the celebration of female friendship, which by all appearances was not in a position to compete with a woman's prescribed duties to her husband's family and did not even enjoy the restricted institutional and ideological support allowed a woman's natal ties. In the poem to be discussed next, the female speaker appears to have company but finds it difficult to share her sentiments with them and ends up turning away from them to converse with her own heart. Ode 39 ("Quan shui," Spring Water), in which the speaker is a woman who is a native of Wei and has been married to another state, reads:

That spring gushes forth;  
 Into the Qi does it flow.  
 My thoughts go out to Wei,  
 Not for a single day do I stop.  
 Those pretty women,  
 With them I might as well consult.

I stayed overnight at Ji,  
 Had the farewell banquet at Ni.  
 When a girl gets married,  
 She goes far away from parents and brothers.  
 Having given regards to my aunts,  
 I next asked about my elder sisters.

I shall stay overnight at Gan,  
 Have a farewell banquet at Yan.  
 Oil the axle and put on the linchpin,  
 Set the coach on the far road back,  
 And soon shall I arrive in Wei:  
 There shouldn't be anything bad about this idea.

their readings of Ode 10 include Cheng and Jiang (25-27), Qu Wanli (1953:8), and Zhang Xuebo (1976: 14).

<sup>75</sup> As Mou (2004: 167n60) notes, the mother-daughter relationship is very marginal in the extant early Chinese texts.

The more I miss the Spring of Fei,  
 The more I heave long sighs.  
 My heart flies to Xu and Cao;  
 It feels empty and sad.  
 I shall yoke the carriage and go for a drive:  
 Thus may I dispel my sorrows.

(Cheng and Jiang 106–109;  
 my own translation)

Commentators generally agree that Ode 39 expresses a married woman's longing for her native state, Wei, though they often disagree on the thought process described in the poem. What the beginning of the poem seems to indicate is that, overwhelmed with homesickness, the speaker seeks the company of a group of women ("those pretty women" in line 5). As they gather, the speaker composes the poem among whatever amusements they find for themselves. Appropriately, the poem twice mentions a banquet.

Tied to the first one, the farewell banquet before she departs to get married, is her last memory of being a daughter in the company of her own kin (second stanza). It is noticeable that she makes special mention of her aunts and elder sisters, who, being mothers and wives in other households, may not have been able to see her off. Apparently, at this juncture of her life, the bride-to-be feels a particular affinity for her female kin, who may have played important roles in her early socialization. It is important to note, however, that formally speaking the pending marriage takes the girl away from her "parents and brothers," and it is this definition of marriage that she articulates in lines 9–10 (女子有行遠父母兄弟).<sup>76</sup> Together with the father and brothers, the mother represents the house that she is leaving, and there is no privileging of the mother–daughter relationship.

The second feast is an imaginary one, which in the speaker's mind takes place in her adopted homeland and will precede a much anticipated reunion with her natal family (third stanza). The excitement is fully manifest in the cheerfulness with which the coach is prepared. The reader is kept buoyed with the delightful illusion until the stanza's last line, when the tentative statement "There shouldn't be anything bad about this idea" betrays her awareness of the many obstacles to her

<sup>76</sup> The lines, "When a girl gets married / She goes far away from parents and brothers," (written as "brothers and parents" elsewhere for rhyming purposes) appear again in Odes 51 and 59. Evidently, parents and brothers were generally taken to represent a woman's natal family.

dream's coming true. It is only now that we really understand lines 5–6, where she says that she “might as well” consult her female companions (聊與之謀).<sup>77</sup>

It is possible, as many commentators have suggested, that “those pretty women” in the speaker’s company are the wives who entered the same polygynous marriage with her.<sup>78</sup> There is nothing in the poem itself to prove this and to preclude the possibility that the women are otherwise related or are simply neighbors and friends. Regardless of the precise relationship between the speaker and her companions, however, the poem makes it clear that their presence has not lifted her out of her gloomy mood. In the end, the speaker feels that she is on her own and must deal with her frustrations and longings by herself. Hence the straightforward expression of intense yearning for her native country in the last stanza. It seems that she now momentarily ignores her companions and indulges in her own feelings. As the final two verses suggest, she decides to go on an excursion alone since her consultation with her female companions has brought no relief to her sorrow.

Indeed, despite the clear indication of company in the poem, what asserts itself is the image of a young wife who, in her struggle to come to terms with her married life, does not find much solace in her companions and cannot but long for her natal kin who are beyond reach. Most illustrative of the paradox between solitude and companionship in the poem is the fact that the current sociable context is completely eclipsed by the other two occasions. Though one feast was in the past and the other is imaginary, they seem to us to be more real and immediate. Regardless of who her female companions are and how they may be connected, the speaker has given us a song about a married woman’s solitude and homesickness. Furthermore, there is no celebration of female friendship, a point that becomes even more noticeable when a speaker is in the company of friends.

<sup>77</sup> Commentators differ in their understanding of the time, place, and functions of the two banquets. My reading follows Zhu Xi (*SJZ* 2.20a–22a) and Cheng and Jiang (106–109). The Mao-Zheng-Kong tradition associates both banquets with the unrealized trip home in the speaker’s imagination (*MSZ* 309). Chen Huan (1786–1863) agrees with Zhu Xi that the first banquet was held for the departing bride in her native Wei, but he understands the second banquet as a farewell party for her escorts who are returning to Wei after accomplishing their mission (*SMZ* 3.113–114). Despite these variations, the commentators agree that the poem reflects the melancholy thoughts of a married woman who misses her natal family but cannot visit them.

<sup>78</sup> Zhu Xi, *SJZ* 2.20b; Yao Jiheng, *ST* 3.89–90; Chen Huan, *SMZ* 3.113; Cao Zhaolan (2004: 237); Cheng and Jiang 107.

*Anonymous Beginnings of a Chinese Tradition of Women's Poetry*

Ode 54 ("Zai chi," Gallop) is the only poem in the *Odes* whose authorship has been attributed to a historical woman on the basis of external evidence. According to *Zuo's Commentary* (*Zuo*, Min 2, Yang 267), Lady Mu of Xu, a native of Wei and wife of Duke Mu of Xu, "*fu*" (賦, a verb that can mean "to compose" or "to recite") Ode 54 (許穆夫人賦載馳) in 660 BCE<sup>79</sup> when Wei fell under the invasion of a pastoral people called Di and Duke Yi of Wei, Lady Mu's half brother, died in battle. Though commentators beginning with Mao Heng and Liu Xiang in the Han have uniformly interpreted the record in *Zuo's Commentary* (or some other common source) to mean that Lady Mu of Xu was the author of Ode 54,<sup>80</sup> the lack of context in the laconic statement and the multiple meanings of the verb *fu* make it difficult to judge whether Lady Mu of Xu actually composed the ode or simply recited it.

If we follow the commentators ancient and modern and take Ode 54 to be composed by Lady Mu of Xu to lament her inability to help her native land when it was lost to the pastoral invaders, the reading yields an image of a solitary woman. In stanzas 2–4 the speaker expresses her grievances against her husband and his court for thwarting her attempt to offer assistance to her natal family when they are struck by a crisis. Frustrated, the woman withdraws into herself. Her thoughts wander to the hills and fields, the only places where she can escape from her unsupportive environment and find a modicum of consolation for her grieving heart: "I walk in the wilderness; / Thick grows the caltrop. / Empty-handed in a great land, / To whom could I go, on whom rely?"<sup>81</sup> The song does not indicate whether the speaker of these lines has company, but her feeling of helplessness reminds us of Ode 39, in which the speaker cuts a solitary figure despite the female company she keeps. Here, as there, female bonding is not invoked as a powerful alternative for women in their struggle with the challenges of marital life.

<sup>79</sup> On the two meanings of *fu* in relation to the performance of poetry in *Zuo's Commentary*, see Yang 31 and 1548. Instances in which *fu* seems to indicate original composition can be found in *Zuo*, Yin 3 (Yang 31), Min 2 (Yang 268), Wen 6 (Yang 547), and Ding 4 (Yang 1548).

<sup>80</sup> Mao uses both *fu* and *zuo* 作 (to create, to compose) in his preface to Ode 54; Liu simply states that Lady Mu composed (*zuo*) Ode 54 (*MSZ* 320; *LNZ* 3.2b–3a). Kong Yingda (*MSZ* 320) elaborates on the semantic equivalence between *fu* and *zuo* in the wording of Mao's preface.

<sup>81</sup> Cheng and Jiang 153; Waley 45. Karlgren's (1950: 36) interpretation of the third line, shared by many authorities (see glosses in Cheng and Jiang 154 and Yang Bojun 599, 1051), may be more apt, "I would hasten to some great state for aid" (/ but whom shall I rely on, to whom shall I go?)

The precise relationship between Lady Mu of Xu and Ode 54 may not be ascertainable: was she its author, or did she merely recite the poem on a social occasion, as was the custom among the elite of the Spring and Autumn period? There are two accounts that leave no doubt about women's participation in the high art of reciting the Odes. Both records feature a sixth-century BCE aristocratic woman; each woman recites a different stanza from Ode 27 ("Lǜ yī," Green Coat). A discussion of the two records may shed some light on the question of women's poetic voice in the largely anonymous preimperial Chinese literary tradition.

The protagonist in one of the records is Mu Jiang, the adulterous and ambitious widow of the late Duke Xuan of Lu. Interrupting a feast that her son Duke Cheng was holding for his chief counselor who had just returned from a diplomatic mission, Mu Jiang addressed a speech to the guest and recited for him the last stanza of Ode 27 before taking her leave (discussed in Chapter 4). The other woman who is recorded as having recited an ode is Jing Jiang, the female paragon known for her meticulous observation of ritual. Inviting the lineage's ritual expert to a feast where she entrusted him with the marriage arrangement for her son, Jing Jiang recited for him the third stanza of Ode 27 (*Guoyu*, Lu 2, 210).

Mao and a long line of classical commentators including Zhu Xi, Yao Jiheng, and Fang Yurun believed that Ode 27 was composed by Zhuang Jiang, the virtuous wife of Duke Zhuang of Wei (r. 758–735 BCE) after she lost a competition with a secondary consort and fell out of favor with her lord.<sup>82</sup> The poem reads:

Heigh, the green coat,  
The green coat, yellow lined!  
The sorrow of my heart,  
Will it ever cease?

Heigh, the green coat,  
Green coat and yellow skirt!  
The sorrow of my heart,  
Will it ever end?

Heigh, the green threads!  
It was you who worked them.  
I think of the ancients:  
Please help me to be blameless.

Broad-stitch and openwork  
Are cold when the wind comes.

<sup>82</sup> MSZ 297, SJZ 2.4b–5a, SY 3.123, ST 3.70.

I think of the ancients:  
They truly know my heart.<sup>83</sup>

In the dominant narrative framework established for the reading of Ode 27 in the classical commentaries, the abandoned duchess expresses bitter feelings over her loss in the first two stanzas of the poem (“The sorrow of my heart, / Will it ever cease?”; “The sorrow of my heart, / Will it ever end?”), and in the next two stanzas she is shown finding solace and courage in thinking about the “ancients” (*gu ren*). Who are the “ancients” in this context? Zhu Xi, who somewhat reluctantly follows Mao in believing Zhuang Jiang to be the author of Ode 27, takes the “ancients” to be women who have suffered a similar fate in the past. In the third stanza, he sees the woman as trying to encourage herself by thinking of those ancients who had had comparable experiences but managed them well, and, in the last stanza, he sees her as remarking on how they anticipated and provided the wisdom that she would need.<sup>84</sup> Only such female “ancients” could fully understand the unjust suffering visited on the ode’s female speaker (我思古人實獲我心), and she looks to them for the strength to survive and to maintain her virtue (我思古人俾無訖兮).

There may be significance in the fact that both Mu Jiang and Jing Jiang, who were the only female practitioners known to have engaged in the high art of reciting the Odes, chose Ode 27 when they wished to convey their own desires and fulfill their practical purposes.<sup>85</sup> Perhaps the common understanding about the poem’s female authorship was behind their choice. Following convention in the recitation of the Odes, both women may have lifted Ode 27 out of its original context (whatever

<sup>83</sup> Cheng and Jiang 66–67; Waley 24–25 (I have modified stanzas 3 and 4).

<sup>84</sup> Zhu Xi, *SJZ* 2.4b. Like Zhu Xi, Wang Zhi expresses skepticism about Mao’s specific attribution of Ode 27 to Zhuang Jiang (the poem offers no such indication) but believes that the poem is undoubtedly a woman’s lament. He infers that this woman must be a wise and thoughtful person who understands both the past and the present. She repeatedly addresses the “ancients” because she knows that what happened in the past will be repeated in the present (*SZW* 2.25).

<sup>85</sup> I have suggested elsewhere that, as they are represented, the two different stanzas of Ode 27 chosen by Mu Jiang and Jing Jiang correspond to the different practical intentions and moral states of the two women (Y. Zhou 2003). Whereas Mu Jiang picks a stanza marked by its passionate longing and susceptible to an erotic interpretation according to the conventions of Odes recitation, Jing Jiang selects a stanza that demonstrates concern with being morally and ritually “blameless” to communicate her message to the ritual expert.

it was) to express their respective intentions, but it is probable that the gender and identity of the original author as generally understood in their time were important factors in recommending this particular poem to them.

The preceding reading is admittedly highly speculative. In the first place, the selection of the same poem by the two women may well be a coincidence. In the second place, in the convention of Odes recitation the sex of the author of an ode or of the speaker in it does not seem to prevent practitioners of the opposite sex from choosing it for presentation. The best examples may be found in two records in *Zuo's Commentary* (*Zuo*, Wen 14, Yang 599; *Zuo*, Xiang 19, Yang 1051). In both accounts, a minister recited at a diplomatic event the fourth stanza of Ode 54 to express his wish to seek assistance from a larger state. In other words, if Lady Mu was indeed the author of Ode 54, then we have here cases in which a woman's poem was recited by a man; or, if she had merely recited Ode 54, then the two records indicate that a man's poem could be recited by a woman. Regardless of Lady Mu's precise relationship to Ode 54, the records about the minister's use of a stanza from it suggest that Mu Jiang's and Jing Jiang's presentations of Ode 27 do not constitute good evidence for women's conscious identification with a tradition of female literary expression in sixth-century BCE China.

Not to force any definitive conclusion but to press the evidence to see whether more light might be shed on women's role in literary creation in ancient China, I would venture that the allusion to Ode 27 in a rhapsody by Lady Ban (d. 6 BCE) may add slightly more weight to the conjecture that early Chinese literary women felt a special affinity for their predecessors. Lady Ban, a palace lady in the Han dynasty, came from an eminent family that had produced generations of scholars and officials. Having enjoyed the favor of Emperor Cheng (r. 37–7 BCE) for a long time because of her learning and ritual propriety, Lady Ban met with a change of fortune when the emperor became enamored of two beautiful sisters in his harem, who were portrayed as jealous, conniving, and brutal in contemporary sources. After a narrow escape from the two sisters' schemes and fearing the worst, Lady Ban gained permission to leave the emperor to serve the Dowager Empress. While in self-exile, Lady Ban wrote the *Rhapsody of Self-commiseration*, in which she tells of her past aspirations and her present misery. The bulk of the rhapsody consists of a haunting description of the abandoned

woman's solitude and depression,<sup>86</sup> but its last part seems to describe the thoughts of the poet as she strives to play the role of a sociable companion:

With pleasant expression, I look at those around me;  
 Pour a winged goblet to dispel my sorrow.  
 I think how one is born to life,  
 Only suddenly to pass as if drifting in a stream.  
 Already I've enjoyed eminence and honor,  
 And lived a life of unmatched blessings.  
 I shall cheer my spirit, enjoy myself to the full,  
 For good fortune and felicity are hard to predict.  
 "Green Jacket" and "White Flower" –  
 From ancient times, such has been the state of affairs.<sup>87</sup>

The image conjured up in this passage – a solitary drinker in the midst of a convivial company but mentally and psychologically removed from it – recalls the analysis of the speaker in Ode 39 ("Spring Water"). The difference is that, whereas the lonely woman in the ode finds no solace for her homesickness in the company that she keeps, Lady Ban sings of an abandoned wife's valiant struggle to find solace in her new life by suppressing her memories of an old love and turning to philosophy. Although it is hard to say whether the uses that Mu Jiang and Jing Jiang made of Ode 27 suggest an interpretation of the poem in agreement with the dominant classical interpretation, Lady Ban's allusion to that ode ("Green Jacket;" "Green Coat" in the Waley translation) clearly indicates that she adopted that line of reading. Centuries before, Zhuang Jiang lost the favor of her lord because of a usurping consort, expressed her sorrows in "Green Coat," and found consolation in the "ancients" who could understand her. Now Lady Ban has also suffered abandonment and resorted to poetry for self-expression. In the same way that Zhuang Jiang looked to the "ancients," Lady Ban acknowledges her

<sup>86</sup> A passage from the rhapsody illustrates this: "I am hidden in the dark palace, secluded and still: / The main entrance is shut, the forbidden gates barred, / Dust lies in ornate halls, moss covers jade stairs, / In its courtyards, green grass thickly grows. / Broad chambers are somber, curtains darkly drawn, / Through empty window gratings the wind blows biting cold. / It stirs curtains and gown, blows red chiffons; / swish, swish, the sound of rustling silks. / My soul flies away to some secret, quiet place; / My lord no longer favors me with his presence – who could feel honor in this? / I look down over the vermillion walkway / And recall where my lord used to tread. / I look up at his cloud-enshrouded chamber / And twin streams of tears pour down my face" (tr. David R. Knechtges, in Chang and Saussy 1999: 20).

<sup>87</sup> Tr. David R. Knechtges, in Chang and Saussy (1999: 20).



indebtedness to the wisdom expressed by the author of “Green Coat” – and also to another historical example of an abandoned woman who used poetry to express her sadness and frustration, King You’s queen, the putative author of Ode 229 (“Bai hua,” White Flower).<sup>88</sup> Invoking “Green Coat” and “White Flower,” Lady Ban concludes her poetic lament, “From ancient times, such has been the state of affairs 綠衣兮白華自古今有之.” Despite the anonymity of Odes 27 and 229 and the consequent difficulty in looking for “genuine” indications of female subjectivity in them, it may be significant that Lady Ban, China’s first historical woman poet whose life and work are securely attested, understood these two odes as the statements of earlier women who shared their misfortunes and sensibilities. The speakers in Odes 27 and 229 provided both poetic inspiration and spiritual consolation for the author of the *Rhapsody of Self-commiseration*.<sup>89</sup>

In his study of how some anonymous poems composed between the end of the first century BCE and the third century CE gained authors during the next few centuries, Stephen Owen points out that the search for authors *speaking about themselves* underlay the authorial attributions. He concludes that in such ascriptions “a poem’s origin is ultimately less interesting than its historical fate.”<sup>90</sup> Borrowing this insight, I suggest the following: if it is basically futile to attempt to determine whether any song in the *Odes* was actually composed by a woman, it is important to know that the anthology contains many poems that were taken to reflect actual women’s experiences and perspectives and that, furthermore, such pieces would provide canonical justification and literary allusions and tropes for later Chinese women who expressed themselves in poetry.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>88</sup> The echoes of Ode 229’s sentiments and poetic techniques in Lady Ban’s rhapsody are not hard to discern. In both pieces, a distressed, abandoned woman yearns with stifled passion for a lover who has become unreachable, yet who still fills the space inhabited by the forlorn woman.

<sup>89</sup> After commenting appreciatively on Ode 27’s putative female author, whom he commends for being wise and for having a sophisticated understanding of the relevance of the past, Wang Zhi concludes by quoting Lady Ban’s line alluding to Odes 27 and 229 (SZW 2.25). It seems to me that Wang Zhi implies a connection between Lady Ban’s use of the two odes and what the woman in Ode 27 makes of the wisdom of the “ancients.”

<sup>90</sup> Owen (2006: 224).

<sup>91</sup> As can be seen in the present discussion, the issue of authorship in general, and of female subjectivity in particular, in early Chinese literary and aesthetic traditions is an extremely vexing one.

In fact, Zhuang Jiang would be routinely evoked by Chinese literati of the imperial period who sought to justify and promote women's poetry writing by tracing it back to the *Odes*.<sup>92</sup> For centuries of writers and readers in imperial China, Zhuang Jiang was not a "poetic persona" as we tend to understand the term but a real woman telling of her personal plight and providing a comforting historical example for women who had to deal with similar suffering. I only want to suggest that this way of reading and experiencing, which lies at the heart of the formation of a Chinese tradition of women's poetry, may have begun much earlier, in the period when poetry almost always took the form of performed songs.<sup>93</sup> A poem known as a woman's song in the beginning or at another critical point during its circulation might acquire other meanings when re-performed on other occasions and to other audiences. However, amidst such fluidity what was perceived to have defined the song's female authorship (from voice and subject to external circumstances) tended to remain particularly associated with women and to mold women's subsequent expression of their experience. As I have tried to argue, that may have been the story behind the composition and use of Ode 27 from Zhuang Jiang, Mu Jiang, and Jing Jiang to Lady Ban.

### Female Experience and Male Imagination

The reading advanced in the previous section cannot and is not expected to preclude the possibility that the female voices in the *Odes*, or at least some of them, may be male masquerades. Instead, fully acknowledging this possibility, I would now like to explore two vexing questions: how much potential does the uncovering of "genuine" female subjectivity in male-dominant societies such as ancient Greece and China have to subvert the mainstream culture and assert a female subculture or even counterculture? And, to what extent was the expression of female subjectivity not only molded by male-dominant values but also dependent on being accepted by the mainstream culture for survival?

<sup>92</sup> On this legitimization strategy, see K. S. Chang (1997), Chang and Saussy (1999: 3), and Xu (2006).

<sup>93</sup> Kern (2005) contends that before the late fourth century BCE (and perhaps even before the second century BCE), there was no roughly standardized written version of the *Odes*. This suggests that until that time oral performance remained the primary transmission form for the canonical song corpus.

My short answer to these questions is twofold. On the one hand, the molding role of male-dominant values and the acceptance by mainstream culture were so crucial to the formation and survival of women's subculture in ancient societies such as Greece and China that we are unlikely to discover a female counterculture that subscribed to radically different values. Sappho was not admired by the Greek greats from Solon to Plato because she sang of forbidden subjects and endorsed subversive ideas or practices.<sup>94</sup> She married, had a family, and composed wedding songs,<sup>95</sup> although, just as the other Greek literary women did whose works are extant, she unquestionably made extrafamilial homosocial bonding the centerpiece of her songs. In doing so, Sappho and other Greek women poets were following the same cultural script and embracing the same social values as the men poets. Their celebration of the mother–daughter bond represents only a partial divergence from the male pattern, because from the patrilineal perspective that bond represents a centrifugal force (mother and daughter will end up in different patrilineal lines) but what they always have in common is their gender. The all-female festival of the Thesmophoria, whose founding myth is the poignant story of Demeter and Persephone (see Chapter 3), illustrates how the mother–daughter bond could be subsumed under the category of female homosocial bonding and publicly affirmed as such in ancient Greece. By the same token, kinship-centered sentiments were the preoccupation of Chinese poets both male and female, the difference being that whereas men sang of agnatic solidarity and filial piety women expressed feelings that extended to their natal kin besides focusing on their husbands (and sometimes on his parents, too). Again, this marks only an apparent divergence from the male pattern because the sentiments about both husbands and natal kin derive from the burdens of marital life and may speak to the imperative centrality of the patrilineal family in the emotional world of Chinese women. The interpersonal concerns and sentiments that come through Greek and Chinese women's poetic voices essentially fit into the male poetic tradition.

<sup>94</sup> See Nagy (2004: 33n23) on the performance of Sappho's songs at men's symposia. Yatromanolakis (2007) suggests that men of the Greek elite may have viewed the sentiments described in Sappho's poetry as comparable to their own homoerotic experiences. Davidson (2007: 406) also notes Sapphic poetry's conformity to the male pattern of homoerotic experience. See also note 32 above.

<sup>95</sup> For example, Sappho 44 and 110–117A. See Snyder (1989: 31–33) for discussion of Sappho's wedding songs. According to the *Suda*, Sappho's husband was a wealthy merchant named Kerkylos.

On the other hand, however, expressions of female experience were not seamlessly integrated into the paradigms of male values. The degree of integration depended on how women were situated and co-opted in the patrilineal family structure. In China, where the patrilineal family gave women well-defined niches of and paths to power, and successfully marginalized female friendship, but set aside space for natal attachment, the stake in marriage and family may have been so high that there was not much room left for articulating alternative concerns. In this case, expressions of female experience tended to be in accord with men's expectations for women's desires and emotions. The same accord cannot be found in the Greek tradition. Penelope's professions of endless grief for her absent husband, which are highly reminiscent of the wifely sentiments in the *Odes*,<sup>96</sup> find no echoes in the songs of the Greek women poets. In embracing the mother-daughter bond and pursuing excellence and intimacy among friends, Greek women rivaled men in celebrating their homosocial experiences with passion. Such emulation elicited an ambivalent attitude among men.

Greek men recognized and accepted that, like themselves, Greek women enjoyed friendship and competition. The public institutions conducive to the formation of female networks, particularly those related to the festivals, could not have existed or operated smoothly without male support. From assuming financial responsibility for their kinswomen's participation in the festivals to composing songs and providing training for the female choruses, Greek men played a crucial role in molding a female subjectivity that grew out of the same larger social environment that nourished the male citizens. In this sense there is a great degree of accord between what emerges from Alkman's maiden songs and

<sup>96</sup> For example, compare stanza 2 of Ode 62 ("Since my lord went to the east, / My head has been tousled as the tumbleweed. / It is not that I lack grease to dress it with; / But for whom should I want to look nice?") with how Penelope answers her nurse's plea that she bathe and anoint herself so as not to appear as though always mourning: "Eurynome, though you care for me, do not speak of such matters / as washing my body and anointing myself with unguents, / seeing that the gods, they who possess Olympos, ruined / my glory, from that time when he went away in the hollow / ships" (*Od.* 18. 178–181; Lattimore 274–275). Similarly, in *Od.* 19.124–126, during her first meeting with the disguised Odysseus, Penelope says, "Stranger, all of my excellence, my beauty and figure, / were ruined by the immortals at that time when the Argives took ship / for Ilion, and with them went my husband, Odysseus" (Lattimore 285). Cf. Clayton's (2004) feminist reading, in which Penelope appears as a bardic figure who articulates an alternative discourse. Rather than stress Penelope's fidelity to Odysseus, Clayton emphasizes Penelope's intelligence (best demonstrated by her act of continuously weaving and unraveling the shroud she is making for Laertes, a trick that successfully deceives the suitors for three years).

Aristophanes' choral odes on the one hand and what comes directly to us from the women poets' works on the other hand. The heroines who shine in both types of sources are young women who embrace female friendships.

However, Greek women's sharing of the same rivalry- and friendship-oriented social values as men inevitably conflicted with men's basic expectations for women, namely, that they be domestic beings and devote themselves to serving the needs of the patrilineal family. As we have seen, these expectations met with a resounding silence in the extant poetry by Greek women. Interestingly, corresponding to the absence of the husband in Greek women's poetry, Greek men did not manifest much interest in telling about women's longings for their husbands. While giving regular vent to their anxiety about women's pursuit of extrafamilial bonding,<sup>97</sup> they only dabbled in the game of ventriloquizing the yearning wife in the image of loyal Penelope.<sup>98</sup>

In short, even though a female counterculture cannot be deduced based on women's poetic voices in either Greece or China, two ways in which the formation and expression of female subjectivity related to mainstream male expectations and imaginations can be identified. In Greece there was an inherent conflict between the nourishing of a female culture that prized rivalry and extrafamilial homosocial bonding and the confining of women to the home and domestic duties. Consequently, it may often appear that male expectations were at odds

<sup>97</sup> Male suspicion and anxiety about women's attachment to their friends finds abundant expression in Greek texts. For example, in Aristophanes' *Women at the Thesmophoria* (lines 795–796) a woman tells of husbands who go all out to find their wives if they have slept in someone else's house after an all-night party during religious festivities, fearing that the wives may be up to something bad while away from home. In *Idyll* 15 Theokritos writes of a man who moves his family far away to separate his wife from her neighbor and close friend, but his effort is not completely successful, because the friend still visits and invites his wife to join her at a festival. More clearly negative versions of these male sentiments can be found in texts ranging from Semonides' seventh-century BCE satire to fifth-century BCE Athenian drama. In his satire, Semonides praises the bee-woman, the only redeeming grace of the female race, for not enjoying "sitting among women and telling erotic stories" (7.90–91). Hippolytos, in the eponymous Euripidean play, denounces wives who gossip and recommends that women dwell with mute beasts so that the women might have no interlocutors (lines 645ff.). In discussing Erinna's lament for Baukis, Gutzwiller (1997: 208) observes that Greek society tended to silence women's expressions of affection for another women as public discourse, fearing it would prove disruptive, and even though the relationships that women established in the early years of their lives "may have constituted the strongest emotional bonds they ever knew."

<sup>98</sup> Examples of references to Penelope's loyalty include Theognis 1126–1128, Euripides' *Orestes* 588–590, and Aristophanes' *Women at the Thesmophoria* 547–548.

with and could not accommodate the independent expression of female experience, but, ironically, such tension was the very result of allowing women to share in male values, in a very limited number of sanctioned institutions (mostly associated with religious activities) while denying them opportunities to realize those values in the same realms and ways as men. In contrast to the ambivalent relationship between female experience and male imagination in Greece, the Chinese sources seem to manifest a greater degree of accord between the two and accordingly present a lower potential for discovering indications of divergence in representations of female experience.

### Conclusion

In both ancient China and ancient Greece marriage posed a tremendous challenge for women, especially young brides, and songs in both literary traditions convey their struggles to cope with this challenge. However, these women are also different in their singing voices. Like their kinsmen, Greek women are highly agonistic in their own songs, and they most value their bonds with those who share their sex and their experience.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, men's and women's voices in Chinese poetry echo each other in their privileging of family relationships, and the complete absence of friendship in the songs with female speakers suggests the even greater subordination of extrafamilial homosocial bonds in Chinese women's lives.<sup>100</sup> Any attempt to discern where "genuine female subjectivity" stops and "false consciousness" begins in the poems believed to have been composed by Chinese women may be in vain.

While again emphasizing that it would be fruitless to try to establish female authorship for the *Odes* and that it is quite possible that at least some of the songs believed to be by women were actually composed by men,<sup>101</sup> I do not believe it to be the case that in the Chinese tradition

<sup>99</sup> Although reflecting a Victorian attitude toward homoeroticism, Marrou (1956: 60) aptly detects a link between friendship in the Sapphic circle and Greek male love: "the aberration indulged in by the *femmes damnées* of Greece was woman's response to the frenzy of love between men."

<sup>100</sup> Here we recall the descriptions of verbal exchanges between men and women in the odes associated with the ancient Chinese festivals (see Chapter 3). As noted there, female friendship is never a theme of those songs, which instead show young women flourishing in the game of courtship.

<sup>101</sup> Students of later Chinese literature will recognize how difficult it is to distinguish the voice of a real woman agonizing over her estranged lord from that of a male ventriloquist pretending to be such a woman (see, e.g., Rouzer 2001, ch. 4). Men wrote behind a female persona for a variety of reasons, not just out of voyeuristic interest or

male domination was such that women were completely deprived of their voices or that female voices in the *Odes* were only echoes produced by men to reflect the male perspective. If Greek women poets express in different forms the same values embraced by their male counterparts, then we have good reason to suspect that the “genuine” voices of Chinese women, if ever retrievable with certainty, will turn out to bear far more resemblance to those of Chinese men poets than to the songs of the Greeks, either female or male. In other words, with all due caution, I believe that the female voices in the *Odes* do allow us valuable insights into women’s experiences in ancient China, and I argue that the different concerns and emotions manifested by Greek women poets and the female speakers in Chinese poetry can be understood in terms of the different degrees to which women were woven into the patrilineal family order in the two societies.

In China, where the incorporation was more thorough and both the mother–daughter bond and extrafamilial homosocial bonding played a less important role, women could experience greater emotional stress and yet would tend to seek relief and redress in ways that were in keeping with the values of the patrilineal family system. They would show greater dependence on their husbands and in-laws, for better or worse, and would attempt to reach out to their natal kin under the crushing

at the request of an abandoned woman seeking poetic expression for her plight. (See, for instance, the anecdote about the composition of the *Tall Gate Palace Rhapsody*; for the resemblance between this work and Lady Ban’s *Rhapsody of Self-commiseration*, see Knechtges 1981: 59.) Beginning with the elegies attributed to Qu Yuan (ca. 340–ca. 278 BCE), the loyal but unappreciated statesman of Chu who eventually committed suicide, there developed a venerable poetic tradition in which male literati express their frustration and sense of alienation, particularly in relation to government service, by assuming the voice of an abandoned woman. For comparative purposes, it suffices to make two points here.

First, unlike Chinese men, Greek men seem to have had little interest in ventriloquizing an abandoned woman. Perhaps they felt that the fantasy about a loyal wife who pines for her husband did not reflect the deeds or words of wives in real life; moreover, the pathetic abandoned woman cannot be found in the extant works of the Greek women poets. The popularity of male ventriloquism in the later Chinese literary tradition derived partly from the belief that the ventriloquist could succeed in capturing the authentic experiences of a real woman who had been abandoned, a belief corroborated in works written by actual women. Second, the greater freedom Chinese literati had to speak in a female voice was probably also connected to the fact that there was no conception in China of Man and Woman as sharply distinct and potentially agonistic races. This point was touched on in Chapter 4 and will be brought up again in the Conclusion. In short, despite the strong possibility that some of the female voices in the *Odes* may have been mediated by male ventriloquists, I believe it is unlikely that those female voices are merely echoing the male position.

pressure of isolation. In other words, the female voices in early Chinese poetry evince women's struggles to adjust to married life with its whole package of duties and strains and to find their places in it. Such poetry may serve a cathartic function in offering emotional release, but it does not aim at seeking an outlet in alternative social relationships.

Underlying Greek women's poetry about the mother-daughter bond and female friendships is the less firm hold that the patrilineal family system exercised on women in ancient Greece. In comparison with the outpourings of longing and frustration in the Chinese poetic tradition, the Greek songs register women's grievances by lavishing attention on the sweet mother-daughter relationship and the bittersweet quality of friendship. If their songs also reflect Greek women's quest for emotional outlets, they do not work through catharsis, which means the alleviation of certain emotions by giving them adequate expression (as in the Chinese tradition), but through the search for alternatives. As such, Greek women's poetry is more amenable to a reading that discerns resistance rather than accommodation and that probes more deeply into women's subjective experience apart from what John Winkler calls "the male discourse of bluff and prescription."<sup>102</sup>

### Appendix: Female Bonds in Jiangyong

In his discussion of the homoerotic relations in Alkman's and Sappho's poems, Bruno Gentili suggests that parallels exist between ancient Lesbos and Sparta and the women's communities in southern China of modern times. In those Chinese communities, women are "recognized lesbians," although they can leave their communities and marry a man, and they have their own rituals and patron deity.<sup>103</sup>

The analogy that Gentili draws only in passing is a provocative one, and I shall take it up here in the form of an appendix and in the hope of shedding light on two questions: did the "civilizing process" that saw the spread of Zhou religious and ethical values associated with the patrilineal family entail strenuous efforts to impede women's cultivation of extrafamilial homosocial bonding? and, is the remarkable accord between male imagination and female experience in early Chinese

<sup>102</sup> Winkler (1990a: 207). To recognize such amenability does not mean that we should overemphasize the "defiance" or "subversiveness" of Greek women's literary voices. As pointed out repeatedly in this chapter, the works of Greek women poets were created and transmitted in socially sanctioned institutions.

<sup>103</sup> Gentili (1988: 77).



poetry a result of the suppression of voices that give expression to different female experiences? My brief exploration will take us to a few remote villages in Jiangyong, Hunan (southern China), a region where female homoerotic practices similar to those mentioned by Gentili and his sources have been attested. What makes Jiangyong particularly suitable for such an explorative and comparative investigation is the discovery there, more than two decades ago, of “female script,” an enigmatic writing system used only by women in Jiangyong probably since the nineteenth century.<sup>104</sup>

As a reflection of the formal, ritualized role that the friendships of unmarried girls enjoyed in Jiangyong’s local society, two common themes of the songs written in the female script are the celebration of extrafamilial female bonding and the resentment of marriage for its disruption of girlhood ties. Embroidery and needlework often provide contexts and tropes for the expression of such sentiments. For example, a passage in a song describes the embroidery work that two girlfriends did together:

We embroidered a pair of golden roosters roosting on a tower,  
We embroidered pairs of birds of all kinds soaring up to heaven.  
We embroidered a pair of yellow dragons leaving their caves,  
Yellow dragons leaving their caves and crossing the oceans.  
We embroidered a pair of carps living in the depths of the sea,  
Couples of them, pair upon pair, each of them inseparable!  
Our mutual love will never be wrenched apart,  
It will last forever, and will never come to an end.<sup>105</sup>

The saliently erotic language in this passage is reminiscent of Sappho’s poetry that sings of the intense bonds among the women of her circle. Similarly, the laments over the damage that marriage causes friendship that are heard again and again in the songs written in the female script

<sup>104</sup> First discovered in 1982, “female script” soon attracted much scholarly attention. The origins of the script are still unclear, though the nineteenth century seems a likely chronological beginning. Female script fell out of fashion after the Communist takeover of China in 1949 and especially during China’s Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Only a few users of the script survived into the 1980s, when scholars descended on Jiangyong to study both the writing system and the culture associated with it. See Chiang (1995), F.-W. Liu (2004a, 2004b), Silber (1994), and other studies listed in the bibliography section of Idema and Grant (2004: 831–832). Aside from the script, F.-W. Liu (2004a) also studies the local women’s singing tradition called “women’s songs,” which share the themes and language of the pieces written in the script.

<sup>105</sup> Idema and Grant (2004: 546).

echo the agonizing farewells between female companions in Sapphic verses.<sup>106</sup> Underlying such thematic and rhetorical parallels between the two corpuses of women's songs may be women's looser fit in the patrilineal family institution both in ancient Greece and in a remote rural area of mixed ethnicities in modern China. The area where the female script was used also saw the common practice of so-called delayed transfer marriage, whereby a few days after the wedding the bride would return to her natal family (where her husband could visit her) and not take up permanent residence in her husband's house until she was about to deliver their first baby.<sup>107</sup> The formal patrilocal relocation normally made it difficult to maintain girlhood friendships and supposedly represented the beginning of a woman's full incorporation into the husband's family, but some women still made efforts to keep in contact with each other through messages written in the female script insofar as geographical proximity allowed such communication.<sup>108</sup> Thus, despite ultimate adherence to mainstream Chinese patrilineal ideology and practice, the local society of Jiangyong – a rural area at the periphery of Chinese culture prior to the mid-twentieth century – left much room for female homosocial bonding and preserved unique literary testimonies of the emotions and networks associated with women's pursuit of extra-familial social relationships.

The discovery of female script as a medium for the celebration of extrafamilial female homosocial bonding within the confines of a few villages in China's southern hinterland alerts us to the possibility that the high degree of accord between male imagination and female experience in the Chinese poetic tradition was achieved as the patrilineal family became increasingly successful in co-opting its female members in the Chinese way.<sup>109</sup> Unfortunately, we may never be able to gain a sense of that process by looking at the known origins of the Chinese tradition.

<sup>106</sup> See, e.g., the songs in Idema and Grant (2004: 548–550), F.-W. Liu (2004a: 268–276), and Silber (1994: 66–67).

<sup>107</sup> The practice of “delayed transfer marriage” (F.-W. Liu 2004a: 262; Silber 1994: 48) was also found in the southern provinces of Fujian and Guangdong (Silber 1994: 48; Stockard 1989).

<sup>108</sup> F.-W. Liu (2004a: 268–276).

<sup>109</sup> F.-W. Liu (2004a: 280) compares the poems written in female script with poetry by literary women in the cultural centers of China's late imperial period (ca. 1400–1900). Whereas the men in Jiangyong (peasant or elite) typically took an indifferent or distrustful attitude toward their womenfolk's use of female script, the flourishing of women's poetry in China's cultural centers rested on generous male support, and these women's works exhibited salient identification of styles and sentiments with men's poetry.

All the extant textual and archaeological evidence shows that the institutional and ideological apparatuses geared toward the co-optation of women in the patrilineal family were already in place in the first splendor of Chinese civilization.

Did the making of the *Odes* involve, among other things, the exclusion and suppression of any celebration of female friendships at the same time as it gave pride of place to patrilineal family and kinship relationships in its transcription of women's poetic experience?<sup>110</sup> If the emphasis on family relationships in the *Odes* was indeed characteristic of the elite culture in all the regions within the Zhou culture sphere, did the steady spread of Zhou elite culture to other regions come to marginalize and suppress the extrafamilial homosocial ties that may have played an important role in the lives and poetic expressions of the women in those places? A positive answer to both questions is conceivable but impossible to defend on the basis of the available evidence.<sup>111</sup> The culture of the female script in a remote and ethnically mixed area in modern Hunan should not be taken to represent the reality beneath the veneer of ideals about ancient Chinese women's lives that can be found in texts by both men and women. If there were always multiple levels and facets of reality determined by class, time, space, and other factors, many centuries of revamping of the institutional and ideological apparatuses inaugurated in the Zhou may have increasingly reduced the diversity of the realities in Chinese family and gender relations. The question of a "genuine" expression of female subjectivity in Chinese poetry was as vexed as it ever was by the end of China's premodern era.

In the final instance, regardless of whether and to what extent the culture of the female script represented an alternative world of female emotions and bonds that steadily retreated before the dominant Chinese culture centered on the values of the patrilineal family, so far as we can tell such an alternative world never had a larger sociopolitical context similar to the ancient Greece of Sappho and other Greek women poets. For all the striking parallels between the women's songs from Jiangyong and those from ancient Greece, we know that in Jiangyong

<sup>110</sup> Dobson (1969: 56), who believes that women composed most of the songs in the *Airs of the States* section of the *Odes*, thus accounts for the homogeneity of the song's language: "their composers – the ladies of the royal courts – despite the broad geographical distribution of the courts, evidently shared a common language and a common tradition of song making – just as they shared common kinship and custom as a class, as the women of the aristocracy."

<sup>111</sup> As stated by Hinsch (2005: 80), "hard information about ancient lesbianism is practically nonexistent."

girls' friendships were typically cultivated in the domestic context and through the activities of needlework and embroidery. There is no indication that in Jiangyong participation in public collective activities provided a regular institutional basis for the development of female friendships, as was the case for women in ancient Greece.<sup>112</sup> We also know the use of female script by women in Jiangyong lacked male support.<sup>113</sup> If for both men and women in Greece peer rivalry, public recognition, and extrafamilial bonding formed the context for defining individual worth and identity, the same context is not known to have existed in China, whether in the mainstream tradition or in the regions and societies that were gradually drawn into the "civilizing process" that began as a conscious enterprise in the Zhou.

<sup>112</sup> F.-W. Liu (2004a: 252).

<sup>113</sup> F.-W. Liu (2004a: 280).

## Conclusion

The Chinese and the Greeks in the tenth to fourth centuries BCE pursued the goal of social solidarity within different institutions. In Greece, it was at the festivals with their musical and athletic contests, at the symposia and gymnasia where men and boys socialized and exercised, and at various collective activities organized by gender and age that Greek men and women (and boys and girls) competed for individual excellence and cultivated personal friendships, peer-group bonding, and civic fellowship. In China, the contexts that exemplified the ideals of sociability were the ancestral sacrifice, the family banquet, and the communal drinking party, all of which were united by the principles of distinction and hierarchy derived from kinship organization.

The examination of different institutional bases for the pursuit of sociability in ancient China and Greece recalls a view that has long been argued and has recently been refined by Geoffrey Lloyd and Nathan Sivin in the field of comparative science, namely, that ancient Chinese society was authority-, conformity-, and interdependence-oriented while ancient Greek society was rivalry-, confrontation-, and autonomy-oriented.<sup>1</sup> Whereas previous scholarship has focused on the king's court, the law court, the academy, and the assembly, I bring in a major new social sphere and investigate how the principles and dynamics at work in domestic and extradomestic domains related to each other and shaped each other. Though it is difficult for comparative studies on this scale to avoid drawing criticism for being too broadstoked, I have attempted to give complexity to the comparison by delineating the specifics of the

<sup>1</sup> G. Lloyd (1996, 2002, 2004); Lloyd and Sivin (2002). There have been extensive discussions of the idea of harmony in Chinese philosophy, often from a comparative perspective (see e.g., Bodde 1953; C. Li 2006, 2008; Liu and Allinson 1988).

subcategories of relationships under the two primary categories of kinship and friendship and by analyzing how those relationships were configured into different and intricate patterns in the two ancient societies. As shown in my study, the constellations of interpersonal relationships in ancient Chinese and Greek sources unfold in sets of affinities and conflicts between people in different roles, in different contexts, over different causes, and to different ends. A few salient points about the affinities and conflicts emerge from the two traditions:

1. Whereas extrafamilial homosocial bonds enjoy foremost importance for identity formation, emotional support, and value orientation in the Greek world, the primacy of patrilineal family and kinship characterizes the Chinese tradition.
2. The Greek evidence is as striking for its demonstration of the significance of female homosocial ties (most importantly between women friends but also between mother and daughter) as for its pervasive sexual rivalry (both positively and negatively portrayed). In comparison, in the Chinese sources sexual conflict takes second place; the management of the relationships among the wives of the family (both across generations and within the same generation) is an object of great concern; and women's homosocial ties, between mother and daughter or between female friends, are endowed with only marginal importance.
3. In the Chinese tradition, the strength of the mother-son bond goes in tandem with the effort to promote a relationship of hierarchy and succession between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. By contrast, in the Greek tradition, the mother-son bond is less central and there is much lesser concern with securing the daughter-in-law's loyalty and obedience to her parents-in-law.

It would be interesting to compare these findings with the theory that the anthropologist Louise Lamphere has proposed in an insightful article entitled "Strategies, Cooperation and Conflict among Women in Domestic Groups."<sup>2</sup> As part of a study that covers societies ranging from modern industrialized countries to African tribes, Lamphere compares the internal and external relationships of women in the patrilocal, patrilineal extended family, and in the nuclear family in a modern peasant economy, using traditional China and modern Greece as the primary

<sup>2</sup> Lamphere (1974). This essay appears in the by now classic anthology that Lamphere coedited with Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, *Woman, Culture, and Society*.

example for each type. Her claims are twofold. On the one hand, the relationships among women in the extended family are characterized by competition and conflict rather than by cooperation because “women’s interests never coincide” under that authority structure. In contrast, the wife in the nuclear family is spared from competition with other women within the domestic group because she is able to exercise direct influence in the household. On the other hand, there is a strong connection between women’s position in the domestic structure and their external relations. For cooperation and alliance women in the extended family usually look to the “less intense relationships outside the domestic group.” Lamphere does not claim that women in nuclear families are less likely to turn to women outside the domestic group for alliance because they are less involved in internal conflict, though this seems to be a corollary that can be logically deduced from her twofold argument on the extended family.<sup>3</sup>

Lamphere’s application of the terms “extended family” and “nuclear family” to traditional China and modern Greece should be understood in terms of two ideal types and in terms of a mixture of demographic reality and conceptual norms. Keeping this in mind, we can test her theory against the two ancient cases on hand, which fit in her typology.<sup>4</sup> The findings in this study present a rather different pattern of women’s internal and external relationships. For China, I have shown that, while potential same-sex domestic conflict was indeed the object of much concern, Chinese women’s pursuit of external relations did not reach nearly the intense level of their Greek counterparts according to all extant evidence from ancient China and Greece. The preeminent status of the patrilineal family in ancient Chinese society vis-à-vis alternative institutions and ideologies and the gender dynamic within the family seem to have prevented Chinese women from depending heavily on extrafamilial homosocial networks for cooperation and alliance as they coped with the pressure of same-sex domestic tension. By contrast,

<sup>3</sup> Lamphere (1974: 104–106).

<sup>4</sup> For a vigorous defense of the validity of using what has been called the modern Mediterranean model to understand the ancient Greek family, see Cohen (1991). The continuity across the line that divides the traditional (pre-1911) and the modern in China can be found in many studies of the Chinese family in the twentieth century, particularly in China’s vast rural areas (see, e.g., Johnson 1983; Wolf 1972). Without assuming such continuity (between ancient and modern Greece and between ancient and modern China), my application of Lamphere’s theory rests on the fact that the configurations of the family order in ancient China and Greece roughly correspond to the two models of family structure set up in her comparison.

while domestic conflict among women of the family appeared to be a relatively minor problem in ancient Greece and the husband–wife relationship was at the center of the Greek conception of family order, a strong element of rivalry characterized the portrayals of Greek conjugal relations, and extrafamilial friendship was represented as occupying exceptional weight in Greek women's lives. Less tightly integrated into the patrilineal family and provided with comparatively rich alternative social outlets outside of the family and kinship network, ancient Greek women appeared to be much more free to embrace extrafamilial homosocial ties for cooperation and alliance and also to be singularly passionate about such relationships.

In its aim to contribute to comparative studies of various dimensions of women's social relationships (inside and outside the family, and the link between the two), and in different societies and historical periods,<sup>5</sup> the current inquiry has also attempted to bring out an important connection between the principles underlying gender relations and other spheres of relationships and activities. For the sexual rivalry in ancient Greece to be articulated with the intensity and pervasiveness that we see in the extant sources, competition and equality as the dominant Greek principles of social organization played a crucial role. On the one hand, Greek women had a fair share in the highly agonistic public sociable events. On the other hand, although male domination and female docility were supposed to be the rule in the domestic domain, such a rule ran counter to the otherwise prevailing competitive and egalitarian ideals, and the family could accordingly take on the appearance of a site where the same public values of rivalry and equality were enacted and tested between the sexes. If the ancient Greek family saw an extension of the public values of competition and egalitarianism into the domestic domain, in ancient China the same principle of hierarchy (based on generation, sex, and age) underlying the functioning of the patrilineal family was extended to govern the operation of society and polity.

The principles of equality and competition underlying the Greek pursuit of harmony and solidarity produced a society that tended to be dynamic but divisive. One of the important sources of the dynamism and divisiveness lay in the contradiction between the society's nominally egalitarian character and its achievement-by-contest principle on

<sup>5</sup> The two anthologies edited by Collier and Yanagisako (1987) and Rosaldo and Lamphere (1974) played an important role in setting the theoretical agendas in this research.



the one hand and the severe disenfranchisement or marginalization of women in the public competition on the other hand (religion being the only major sphere of exception).<sup>6</sup> Notions of sexual rivalry and of women as a distinct sex tribe with separate and likely antagonistic interests run through Greek sources of various periods and genres, and all-female sociable activities (especially religious and ritual events) provided institutional frameworks for the forging of strong extrafamilial female ties that could come into conflict with male-dominated family interests. Both in men's imagination and in women's own literary creations, when women come together during the all-female events, they are endowed with voices to speak up, camaraderie to appreciate and to give each other strength, and the ability to pursue their own interests and agendas. The predominant concern with homosocial bonding seen in women's own works and the mixture of admiration and anxiety that Greek male authors demonstrated toward their competitive womenfolk point us to the intriguing dynamism of gender relations in the Greek tradition.

A set of reasons may explain why the ancient Greek idea of all men and all women constituting two potentially antagonistic human races based on gender difference and transcending individual roles in family and kinship networks did not rise in ancient China. First, in ancient China the patrilineal family was defined as the central locus of everyone's existence (regardless of one's sex) and extrafamilial homosocial bonding was assigned to a secondary status in the lives of both sexes and particularly so in the case of women. Second, with generation and age functioning as determinants of family status besides gender, male power was constantly undercut and the incentives of motherhood worked to co-opt women in the fundamentally male-centered family order.<sup>7</sup> Third, with hierarchy and distinction installed as the fundamental principles governing all social relationships in ancient China, gender distinction would not take on the crucial significance that it did in Greece, where one's subordination to another and the difference between a man and a woman could be the distinction between being free and unfree and

<sup>6</sup> As has been repeatedly pointed out, the much-vaunted equality in the Greek city was built on the suppression of so-called out-groups who had limited or no access to the rights and activities in the privileged public sphere (see Arthur 1984; O. Patterson 1991, ch. 7; Roberts 1994, ch. 12; Vidal-Naquet 1986, Part 3).

<sup>7</sup> In explaining why women in traditional China could accept the subordination imposed on them, Guisso (1981: 60) invokes as the most important factor the higher principle of youth's subordination to age.

between being fully human and less so.<sup>8</sup> Finally, the highly divided interests of women (especially between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, among sisters-in-law, and among a man's multiple consorts) in accordance with their different and evolving roles in the close-knit family and kinship network could easily make same-sex rivalry the commonest and most vicious domestic problem. Such division meanwhile compelled women to compete for their husbands' favor and also to invest heavily in their bonds with their sons, thereby reinforcing their attachment to the patrilineal family.<sup>9</sup>

All the foregoing factors combined to foreclose in the Chinese tradition a generic concept of women as a discrete and potentially antagonistic category of human being vis-à-vis men and to create in its stead a web of hierarchical but mutually dependent interpersonal relationships that cut cross gender lines.<sup>10</sup> The conclusion drawn here fits in with what other scholars have argued in studies of later Chinese philosophical, medical, and didactic discourses, usually with an emphasis on the uniqueness of the *yin-yang* concepts. For example, in her study of biology and gender boundaries in late imperial China, Charlotte Furth observes that "there was nothing fixed and immutable about male and female as aspects of *yin* and *yang*" and that instead "Confucianism constructed gender around strict hierarchical kinship roles."<sup>11</sup> Tani Barlow, who also concludes that premodern Chinese assumed no foundational status for Woman beyond familial relations, remarks that "what appears as 'gender' are *yin/yang* differentiated positions: not two anatomical 'sexes,' but a profusion of relational, bound, unequal dyads, each signifying difference and positioning difference analogically."<sup>12</sup> Lisa Raphals and Li-hsiang Lisa Rosenlee make similar claims by emphasizing the

<sup>8</sup> The conditions of being female or of being enslaved or otherwise deprived of autonomy were conceptually linked in Greek discourse (Davidson 2007: 45–46; Just 1989: 172–177; O. Patterson 1991: 109–120; Vidal-Naquet 1986: 205–223). On the concept in Aristotle of woman as a deformed and incomplete man, see P. Allen (1985: 97–100), Elshtain (1993: 41–46), and Okin (1979: 81–84).

<sup>9</sup> This mechanism is best analyzed by Wolf (1972) in the context of the traditional family in twentieth-century Taiwan.

<sup>10</sup> This is not to downplay the existence of gender conflict in China. I am only pointing out that the notion of a perpetual rivalry between Men and Women as two sex groups is unique to the Greek tradition. See Chapter 4 (note 57) on the distinction between this type of sexual antagonism and the kind of gender conflict (occurring in individual families and between men and women of specific and evolving kinship roles) that was familiar to the Chinese.

<sup>11</sup> Furth (1988: 1, 3).

<sup>12</sup> Barlow (1994: 259).

connotations of complementarity, interaction, and harmony in the *yin-yang* concepts.<sup>13</sup>

Instead of taking abstract concepts as the basis of analysis and moving from concept (*yin-yang*) to concept (gender attributes and relations), I locate gender relations in concrete institutions and sociable contexts within which sentiments are articulated, relationships are enacted, and concepts are formed. There are two advantages to my approach. First, it enables us to better understand *why* the Chinese did not think in terms of innately opposing gender traits. Second, the purely conceptual perspective faces the difficulty of having to explain the discrepancy between all the connotations of harmony and flexibility of the *yin-yang* concepts and the construction of gender around strict hierarchical kinship roles in premodern Chinese society in reality. Furth, for example, notes how the natural philosophy of *yin-yang* “would seem to lend itself to a broad and tolerant view of variation in sexual behavior and gender roles” but that did not materialize in social reality.<sup>14</sup> To approach from social institutions and sociable contexts allows us to have a situational understanding of the affinities as well as the conflicts in concrete interactive gender relations and thus puts us in a better position to grasp the missing link between philosophical concepts and social systems and behaviors.

If the intralineage competition among the men could well coexist with the high premium set on patrilineal kinship solidarity (*vis-à-vis* outsiders), even as the strongly coercive imperative of such solidarity might have contributed to the internecine competition, a similar dynamic may have been at work on the distaff side. If the ideal of familial solidarity was even harder to come by among the wives and mothers whose interests more often diverged than coincided, it only gave greater cause to engage in vigorous control of the conflict and diligent effort to establish hierarchy among the women and to promote their collective allegiance to the patriline that connected ancestors and descendants. By the same token, while the privileging of the common domain in ancient Greece may have directly contributed to the strong agonistic element in Greek gender relations, the approach that Greek men and women took to it – passionately embracing extrafamilial ties and activities while allowing conjugal rivalry abundant expression in the domestic context – was perhaps a most natural Greek solution. *Agon* was a Greek passion not just in the common domain and not just in relation to men.

<sup>13</sup> Raphals (1998, ch. 7); Rosenlee (2006, ch. 3).

<sup>14</sup> Furth (1988: 1, 3).

The images of the Chinese women conducting ancestral sacrifices alongside their kinsmen and of the Greek women participating in festivals and other ritual activities in the company of other women in the community may serve to exemplify the two different patterns of interpersonal and gender relations in the two ancient traditions. "Under the ancestors' shadow" lived both men and women in Chinese society,<sup>15</sup> and the fierce contests in the presence of gods epitomized the contexts in which Greek men and women pursued their highest form of group solidarity. The tension and conflict that paradoxically arose from the imperative of patrilineal kinship solidarity in the Chinese family both divided Chinese women as a gender group and attached them more firmly to that institution because there was little alternative outside of it. By contrast, Greek women bonded with their female friends, and the agonistic spirit that they shared with their kinsmen and brought home found expression in the pervasive presence of sexual rivalry in Greek representations of conjugal relations. Portrayed both positively and negatively, such competition testifies to the less firm grip that the patrilineal family institution exerted on both men and women and also to the high value set on the experience and bonds in a common domain transcending kinship ties in Greek society.

In a famous passage in her *Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986) reflects on why women had suffered in their subordinate position throughout history and failed to get rid of their masters:

The reason for this is that women lack concrete means for organizing themselves into a unit which can stand face to face with the correlative unit. They have no past, no history, no religion of their own; and they have no such solidarity of work and interest as that of the proletariat. They are not even promiscuously herded together in the way that creates community feeling among the American Negroes, the ghetto Jews, the workers of Saint-Denis, or the factory hands of Renault. They live dispersed among the males, attached through residence, housework, economic condition, and social standing to certain men – fathers or husbands – more firmly than they are to other women.<sup>16</sup>

These thoughts from a most vital mind perceptively identify the source of women's historical subordination and the mechanism of the modern feminist revolution.<sup>17</sup> The women in both ancient China and Greece no

<sup>15</sup> *Under the Ancestors' Shadow* is the title of anthropologist Francis Hsu's (1948) well-known book on Chinese culture.

<sup>16</sup> de Beauvoir (1993: xlviii).

<sup>17</sup> The term *feminism* is notoriously difficult to define. For me, feminism as a social vision may be said to consist of three core components: it contends (1) that women as a sex

doubt fit into the historical picture portrayed by Beauvoir. However, crucial differences also set them apart. In comparison with their Chinese sisters, Greek women had more “means for organizing themselves into a unit which can stand face to face with the correlative unit.” In their collective activities they may be described as being momentarily and “promiscuously herded together” (returned home after each gathering, they carried on their daily lives until the next event), but the female solidarity thus formed and celebrated both was very important in their lives and contributed importantly to their being viewed as a separate race with redoubtable power in the eyes of men. Between them, what Beauvoir observes of women’s historical lack of organization and collective consciousness fits the women in ancient China even more. Hardly existent or imagined as a tribe in opposition to men, they were mothers and wives deeply integrated into the welfare of their sons and husbands and dependent on them for exercising their well-defined authority and influence. These women were only too tenuously attached to other women to make sisterhood a major source of support and power.

It has been observed that “the Woman Question was already adumbrated in [the] first modernism” of ancient Greece.<sup>18</sup> I, too, believe that the different patterns of supporting and representing gender relations as shown in this study have important implications for our understanding of the different paths to feminism in China and the West in the modern period. Such a claim does not attempt to endow the “origins” with a deterministic role or to suggest that we can in any way ignore the other traditions in the two civilizations or the many centuries between the modern age and Greek and Chinese antiquities, which witnessed numerous ideological and institutional innovations and changes that profoundly remolded gender relations in China and the West. A belief in a link between the patterns of gender relations in ancient China and Greece and modern developments is only supposed to guide us to identify those elements that have endured across centuries and to make us better appreciate a fact. That fact is that we are still grappling with some

group have been subjected to unequal and unfair treatment by men, (2) that such inequality is against the principle of natural rights and must be corrected just as those rights had recently been won for men across social classes, and (3) that women must develop a sense of sisterhood and make concerted efforts to change their historically and socially determined subordinate condition. For this succinct definition I have consulted Cott (1987: 4–5) and Lerner (1993: 274).

<sup>18</sup> Redfield (2003: 12). For other scholars and women’s activists who identify a Greek heritage for modern feminist concepts and movements, see, e.g., Cheliga (1896) and O. Patterson (1991, ch. 7).

of the same problems that the ancient Chinese and Greeks confronted in structuring social spheres, handling family and gender relations, and prioritizing the values and goals of societies. If anything, our more complex world has only rendered these endeavors more difficult. Amid concurrent talks of global convergence and concerns with civilizational rifts and clashes in our time, it may be more critical than ever to reexamine the legacies of the classical civilizations in an attempt to better understand where we came from and how we arrived where we are in the intricate matters that have to do with our nature as sociable beings.<sup>19</sup> I hope the current study will yield a few insights both for those who are interested in antiquity for its own sake and for those who are inclined to think about civilizational legacy when they follow our ancient Chinese and Greeks to their festivals, altars, and banquet tables.

<sup>19</sup> Eisenstadt (2000: 25) names gender as one of the “most important new problems” faced by those who are concerned with the question of whether there is only one model of modernity (i.e., the Western model) or there are multiple modernities based on the experiences of cultures with different historical legacies. The status and function of the family in the modern age have been a key subject of contention among theorists of a wide gamut of philosophical beliefs and social agendas, from classic liberalism, Marxism, feminism, structural functionalism, and neoconservatism to postmodernism (Berger 2002, ch. 2).

# Bibliography

## Abbreviations of Journal Titles

<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>CA</i>	<i>Classical Antiquity</i>
<i>CLEAR</i>	<i>Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews</i>
<i>CP</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>CW</i>	<i>Classical World</i>
<i>EC</i>	<i>Early China</i>
<i>EMC</i>	<i>Échos du Monde Classique / Classical Views</i>
<i>G&amp;H</i>	<i>Gender and History</i>
<i>G&amp;R</i>	<i>Greece and Rome</i>
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>HJAS</i>	<i>Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JAS</i>	<i>Journal of Asian Studies</i>
<i>JCP</i>	<i>Journal of Chinese Philosophy</i>
<i>JESHO</i>	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>NN</i>	<i>Nan Nü: Men, Women, and Gender in China</i>
<i>TAPA</i>	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
<i>TP</i>	<i>T'oung Pao</i>

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